

**THE SCHOOLS
AND
SCHOOLMASTERS
OF CHRIST**

Joseph Farquhar, M.A.

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The Schools and Schoolmasters of Christ

A TREATISE ON THE INFLU-
ENCES WHICH MOULDED THE
CHARACTER AND AFFECTED
THE LIFE OF CHRIST . . .

BY

JOSEPH FARQUHAR, M.A.
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To
MY PARENTS
AND THE
REVEREND DONALD McKAY
ECHT, ABERDEENSHIRE,
THE GUIDES OF MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH,
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED IN
GRATEFUL MEMORY.

PREFACE



IN dealing with any aspect of the life of Christ much depends on the view taken of the Bible, from which alone the facts can be drawn.

The unity of the revelation regarding Christ, and the good faith and intelligence of the various writers who have testified of Him, are assumed in the following pages.

The author does not regard it as any part of a Christian teacher's work to so disintegrate the text of the New Testament by critical methods, that from the fragments which remain after the process only an inferior Christ can be consistently inferred. He believes that Christ is greater than the

Scriptures, and that the best they contain concerning Him is the truest revelation of His character.

Only aspects of the subject are here dealt with. Doctrines and critical questions are but incidentally and suggestively touched upon in keeping with the restricted plan of the work. The Revised Version has been quoted throughout.

This little volume, with its many imperfections, is sent forth with the prayer that some may be induced to become disciples in the school of Christ and devote their life to Him who gave His life for all.

The author would acknowledge his thanks to his friend the Rev. E. Ritchie, of the Presbyterian Church, for kindly undertaking to read the sheets while passing through the press.

BLACKBURN, *October*, 1901.

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I

THE NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus.”—MATT. i. 21.

WE can never understand Christ, nor appreciate the work He did, till we read His life sympathetically in the light of both prophecy and history. To read the Old Testament, for example, in such a way as to exclude from it all genuine reference to Christ, or to read the New Testament with the suspicion that it is a book designedly made to harmonise with a Jewish Messianic theory, and so raise an extraordinary man to the dignity of a god, is to start blindfolded in our quest after the Saviour of the world. We must be free to walk with our risen Lord on His way to Emmaus and listen to Him interpreting from Moses and all the prophets the things concerning Himself and which it behoved the Christ to suffer before entering into His

glory, if our hearts would burn with love to Him and our feet become swift and beautiful in carrying His messages of good-will to the world.

Nor is there anything artificial or unscientific in this claim. For if Christ be indeed "God manifest in the flesh" as we believe Him to be, He is more than the ancient prophets and apostles saw Him to be, and more by a great deal than we have yet seen Him to be, though we have had the unspeakable advantage of reading His life in the light of His influence in history for two thousand years. We are right in so reading His life; and the men who come after us will be right in reading His life in the light of the highest triumphs of the gospel in their day, right on till every eye shall see Him as He is at His appearing.

Christ saw more concerning Himself in the Old Testament than the writers who testified of Him ever saw; yet He saw nothing in Moses and the prophets about Himself that was not there. We may well believe that Isaiah or the Isaiahs (for the number is immaterial here) wrote their glowing prophecies under the inspiration of events that were going on in their own day, and of hopes that were rising in their own hearts, without seeing all that was involved in their

own utterance. But we are right in seeing Christ in the ninth and in the fifty-third chapters of their book, without concerning ourselves about the extent of their vision. Noah saw the rainbow, and we see the rainbow ; but we see in it a great deal more than Noah saw ; yet all that we now see, and all that science may yet reveal concerning light, was involved in Noah's vision. So is it with the visions which the Bible writers had concerning Christ. They saw Him, and we see Him ; but we see Him in a fuller light than they did, because we can look at Him in the light of all that has transpired in the world between their day and ours.

In this sympathetic mood, then, we approach the study before us chiefly with the view of discovering what persons and circumstances affected the character and aided in determining the work of our Lord. We shall find in the progress of our inquiry that He came under the influence of many schoolmasters in many different schools, all of whom have joined in moulding those incomparable features of greatness which have given to Jesus "the name that is above every name."

Jesus received His name twice, first as a prophecy and then as a history. At His birth He received His name as a prophecy of what He should do : "Thou shalt call His

name Jesus, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." At His ascension He again received His name as a history of what He had accomplished : " Wherefore also God highly exalted Him and gave unto Him the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth." God gave the supremacy to Jesus.

Such at least was Paul's idea of what took place at the ascension, and he never hesitated all his life in ascribing this pre-eminence to Jesus. Thus when he addressed himself to the Athenians amidst the effigies of gods and heroes splendid in their marble beauty or golden worth ; when he came to Ephesus intoxicated with its worship of the world-renowned Diana ; when he stood in Philippi face to face with the monuments of the Macedon conquerors, and looked on the fields haunted by the shades of Brutus and Cassius ; when, as a prisoner in Cæsar's household, he taught in the imperial city of Rome, there was still only one name worthy to be ranked far above every other name : the name of Jesus. That was Paul's belief, and it has been ever since the Christian belief. But here a question arises : Is Paul's belief justified by the facts, or may it not be

the extravagant vision of an enthusiast? May there not be other names which, when fairly judged, may be equal to the name of Jesus? These are legitimate questions, and challenge investigation. What are the facts? Is the name of Jesus really the greatest name among all that have appeared in the world of fame and action? We must traverse a wide field for the answer; for the apostle includes all the names in heaven, on earth, and even those under the earth; the living and the dead; the past and the future. We shall compare the fame of them all in their turn with the fame of Christ in order to find out whether Paul and the Bible are justified in ascribing the absolute supremacy to Jesus.

I. HEATHEN GODS. Among the gods of the heathen world Baal and Zeus, Mars and Minerva, Rā and Vishnu have been named the greatest. They at least are no rivals of Jesus, for the most famous of them have long since been banished from their thrones in His name, and their temples have crumbled before His face into gigantic ruins, so that even among the classic fields of Greece and Rome, where once they loved and fought like mortals, these divinities are revered no more. The classic gods are dead, slain by the Cross of Christ. As for the rest: the hideous monstrosities of the modern heathen world,

they retire more and more into their native mists among the hills of the black and yellow races as the power of Christ advances. He has a name to-day greater than the gods.

2. ANGELS. Beings of angelic rank, winged and wingless, have in the poetry of human thought had great attributes ascribed to them, and many are the mighty deeds they have done for the comfort and deliverance of man. Michael, great in defence of human rights, has been named chief of the order ; and Gabriel, who stands before God, is his honoured peer. But they have not attained unto the fame of Jesus ; for unto which of the angels hath God at any time said : " Sit thou on My right hand ? " The angels are but " ministering spirits " sent forth to do service to the heirs of salvation ; and they received their greatest honours when commissioned to announce at Nazareth the coming of Christ and to sing, " On earth peace," around His cradle at Bethlehem. He has a name higher than the angels.

3. DEVILS. Among the principalities and powers of the unseen world are named many spirits of evil repute, to some of whom great power and glory have been attributed. We need consider only the fame of their chief. The fame of Satan is universal. His name, it is true, has not always been spelt in the

same way. As suits his character and the extent of his kingdom, he appears in philosophy and in history under many a guise. At one time he is described as the "Darkness of Asia," the equal sharer of dominion with the "Light"; and at another time he is described as the "Old Crooked Serpent," with power to destroy the very handiworks of God. Sometimes we speak of him familiarly as "The Bad Man" of our childhood, or we describe him more philosophically as "The Evil Spirit." But by whatever name we speak of him we attribute great power to him. In Christian circles he is regarded as the chief rival of Jesus. For instance, Satan is the Supreme Being of the pessimists and of all those who, for theological or other reasons, believe honestly that, in spite of the influence of Christ and Christianity, the world is steadily waxing worse and worse. Milton has sung the glories of Satan till men feel almost constrained to worship an intellect and power like those displayed by the hero of "Paradise Lost."

We need not now consider whether Satan is really great, for we are concerned here only with his historical reputation. That is great, but how does it stand as compared with the reputation of Christ? And here all are agreed that Christ has a greater name,

The Scriptures always show Christ as securing an easy victory over Satan. Milton leaves his hero under the foot of Jesus; the pessimists limit the supremacy of the devil to the present dispensation, and become optimists in view of the Second Advent. All are at one in giving the advantage to Jesus. He has a name greater than Satan.

4. THE HEROES OF MYTHOLOGY. The names of these heroes stand for great deeds, and if we read their history sympathetically we shall not undervalue their achievements. They are reputed to have destroyed various physical evils represented to the imagination in the form of Chimæras and Minotaurs and Gorgons, and they are therefore honoured among the great ones who have made life worth living. Veritable saviours of mankind in their narrow sphere were these old heroes; and the world would be distinctly poorer without the fame of Bellerophon and Hercules and Theseus. But their greatness, like that of Samson, rests mainly on feats of strength, and is clearly of a lower grade than that of Him who is the Saviour of all men from sin itself.

5. THE HEROES OF HISTORY. We think first of Moses and Sakya Muni, and Confucius and Mohammed. Each of these names lies at the root of a great religion,

and in that respect comes into closest comparison with the name of Jesus. They stand for great men, who exercised the widest influence over the human mind. Nor has their influence been so bad as some believe. They spoke to their time and people as God gave them light. To believe that the peoples of China and India have all these centuries been under the thrall of a wholly false philosophy, is to reflect on the Divine wisdom which provides for the well-being of every creature. Rather should we believe that God gave them such leaders, as He gave Moses to Pharaoh's bondmen, to lead them out to greater freedom and fuller light. And though, like Moses also, they may have led their followers but a little way, and then left them bewildered in the desert, may we not also believe that, like the children of Israel, they were left nearer the borders of their promised land? Great men they undoubtedly were; and scholars have found among their sayings, "in Vedic verse, in dull Koran," some worthy of being placed side by side with the precepts of Christ. But there the likeness ends. To name Confucius or Mohammed with Christ is like naming the Koran with the New Testament, or comparing candlelight with sunlight.

In other departments of life other great men have come to immortality. Homer

and Dante and Shakespeare have no equals. They are the chief among the scribes, and their mystic measures will charm the mind as long as words endure. The Pharaohs, the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Napoleons, and the Nelsons, all have mighty names. In their strength, and bravery, and wisdom, they made the very earth shake with the tramp of armed men, and tinged the emerald sea with the bloody glory of war. Patriotic sometimes, protective frequently, destructive often, ambitious always, they were at once the terror and the pride of men; and in pointed pyramid and chiselled stone their memorials are with us; but they all put together have no monument like that which the centuries have raised in honour of the Prince of Righteousness and Peace! Socrates and Augustine, and Luther and Kant, each in his own way has done the world great service. The first almost looked into the face of Christ and got his inspiration there; the others but tried to interpret to their fellows the Great Teacher's thought. Than these there are no greater names left to consider. We have heard of the wealth of Cræsus, the eloquence of Cicero, the paintings of Raphael, the sculptures of Angelo, the music of Mendelssohn, and the discoveries of Newton, each and all of whom

have made great names for themselves in the galaxy of fame ; but they have no place by the side of Jesus.

Christ wielded no sword, He built no pyramid, He amassed no riches, He composed no music, He carved no statue, He painted no picture, He used no pen, He bequeathed no book, He did nothing to make a name for Himself such as common men of genius do ; and yet the enlightened minds of every land agree to-day that Paul was justified in giving the pre-eminence to Jesus.

When we turn from these comparisons to seek for evidences of this greatness they meet us on every hand. Take for instance the mode of reckoning time. We have heard of time being reckoned as from the creation of the world, we have heard of it being reckoned as from the foundation of some imperial city, and we have heard of it being reckoned by the number of moons, but never before have we heard of any man to whose birth succeeding ages have looked back as the most important event from which to reckon time. Christ alone of all men was great enough to thus stamp the ages with His name ; and the time is not far distant when every other mode of reckoning will be superseded and the whole world will ask : Did such and such events happen before or after Christ ?

Again, for well-nigh two thousand years Christendom has been baptized in the name of Christ. During that time, and in many lands, changes have taken place in the Christian ordinances, and many modifications of ritual and of doctrine have been made since first He bade His disciples evangelise the world and baptize their converts. But through all the changes one thing has remained unchangeable: the charm of the name of Jesus in the initial ordinance of the Christian Church. Morning, noon, and night, from millions of hearts and homes, prayers ascend to God for every gift and grace and blessing of which the human life has need, and with each petition is linked "the all-prevailing name." And when men come to die they are buried in the name of Jesus and His Cross is carved on their tombstone, because the power of His name changes death into a sleep, and the virtue of His Cross gives them a sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life.

Again, in His name and for His service cathedrals have been built, churches erected, universities and colleges founded, hospitals and asylums raised, for the perfecting of character, the instruction of the mind, the relief of suffering and the healing of disease. Christ is the founder of all unselfish and

benevolent institutions. No other great man before His time ever thought of such things.

A still more striking sign of the power of Jesus' name is the mission enterprise of the world. No other founder of a great religion ever had followers with the self-sacrificing enthusiasm for their master which burned in the hearts of men like Paul and Columba, and Loyola and Carey, and Livingstone and Chalmers. Men of their stamp took their lives in their hand, and for no selfish end went forth in the name of Jesus to win the Greek and the barbarian, the untutored savage and the cannibal, to the hope of eternal life. No other name has such a charm.

If now we ask how this greatness is to be accounted for, seeing Christ did nothing such as other great men do to make Him great, we shall find the answer in one word : Self-sacrifice. Christ left a new idea in the world, the idea, namely, that life comes through the death of self. He had the right of equality with God ; but He humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation, He stooped to be a servant, He elected to suffer. As we consider His life in succeeding chapters we shall see that Christ never took advantage of any outward circumstance to benefit Himself or further

His interests. He stooped to the lowest place, and therefore He has been exalted high over all. And His greatness lies in the fact that by so stooping in love, He came down to our fallen level and stretched out His hand to help and save. For in His exaltation we also are raised up ; and this it is which gives the key-tone to our song :

“ All hail the power of Jesus’ name !
Let angels prostrate fall ;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

II

ECHOES FROM HIS ANCESTRY

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ."—
MATT. i. 1.

IF we would rightly understand a great man we must know something of his ancestors, especially of his mother ; for, unless the biographies speak false, all good men owe most to their mothers. Henry Drummond, in his book on the "Ascent of Man," shows how evolution kept working upwards till it produced a mother, and seemed so well satisfied with the result that it had produced nothing higher. In view of this fact it is important, when we come to consider Christ, to take into account the influences which affected Him on the maternal side. In His case there is the greater reason for adopting this line of inquiry, because of the affirmation of Scripture that He had no earthly father, but only an earthly mother. As far

as influences of heredity affect His character Joseph need not be considered : we are concerned more with Mary.

But the genealogy of Him whose name is above every name is so unique that we must go farther back than Mary, and think not so much of the mother, as of the mothers of Christ. In the list of His ancestors given by Matthew five women are mentioned, and only five—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. Now the remarkable thing is that women should have been mentioned at all in a Hebrew family tree, since they are almost always ignored. But when we reflect who these women were it seems still more extraordinary that the sacred historian should have named them in the pedigree of our Saviour. There is something peculiar about the history of each and every one of them as it is unfolded in the Bible ; and when this peculiarity is taken into account the story of the natural extraction of Jesus becomes a romance of truth stranger than fiction. We may depend upon it that these five women are not named in the genealogy except for the special features in their case, and that they would not have been named at all except for the interesting light they throw on the Messiah and the Messianic ideal as incarnated in Christ. If four of them con-

tributed but remotely to His physical characteristics, they nevertheless affected His history on its strictly human side in such a way as to enrich our conception of Him, and explain some facts and sympathies in His life otherwise unexplained. What is meant will appear as we consider in its turn the peculiar contribution made to the history of Jesus by each of these women.

I. THE STORY OF TAMAR, as recorded in Genesis, is one of the least inviting in the sacred records ; but it has a place there for a special and useful end. Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, soon after the arrival of his father's family from Padan-aram, took to himself a wife of the daughters of Canaan, and she died just after the birth of her third son, leaving him a widower with three boys. When the oldest one came of age his father chose a wife for him, also from the daughters of Canaan among whom they lived. This was Tamar, a woman of great energy and unflinching purpose, who, as we know from several references in the Bible, left a deep impression on the subsequent history of Israel. Tamar's marriage-joy, however, was short-lived, for her husband, a young man of reckless and dissolute habits, met with an accident and left her a childless widow. Judah thereupon, according to a custom

which afterwards became a law, urged his second son to marry the widow in order to preserve the name of his dead brother. The young man did not like the arrangement, and this second marriage proved quite as disastrous as the first, for the second husband, like his brother, died suddenly and left no issue. Judah had now only one son left, and he was but a boy. He, however, promised Tamar that Shelah his youngest son should marry her whenever he came of age.

Now in this third prospective marriage the interest centres, for there is nothing between the tribe of Judah and extinction save the prospective issue of Tamar and Shelah, it being remembered that this issue would still be regarded as heir, through the widow, to the patrimony of the eldest son. In due time Shelah came of age; but his father, fearing that his only remaining child might meet the fate of his brothers, kept putting off the wedding till Tamar became convinced that he would not fulfil his promise. She at once decided what to do, and waited her opportunity. Since the death of his wife Judah had lived in retirement; but at length he laid aside the tokens of his bereavement, and made up his mind to attend the annual festival of the sheep-shear-

ing at Timnath, a place made famous in later history by the exploits of Samson. Tamar heard of his intention, and determined that she too would attend the feast. Disguising herself in the attire of one of the priestesses of Ashtaroath employed in the immoral rites on such occasions, she put herself in Judah's way, with the result that an irregular union was formed between them. During the interview, Judah had promised to send her a present from his flock ; but having been deceived by his promises before, she would not let him go till he had left his staff and his ornaments as a pledge of his good faith. As soon as Judah was out of sight, Tamar fled to her father's house where she had lived during her widowhood, so that when the present in due course arrived the woman was nowhere to be found. It was a little aggravating, since she was off with a valuable ring and bracelets ; but Judah thought nothing more of the matter, supposing that he had been the victim of a loose woman's deceit.

Now in due time it began to be rumoured about that Tamar had proved unfaithful to her engagement with Shelah, and so wroth was her father-in-law that the poor woman was condemned to be burned for her sin. Ah ! that righteous anger !

how it rises in a man's breast when he thinks himself innocent in the matter ! And how merciless it is to the erring ! Away with her, burn her, stone her ; she has sinned ! And the man in his assumed innocence forgets his own part, and is unsuspected by society ! Tamar waited till her execution was impending, and then produced the ring, the bracelets, and the staff, to prove the identity of her partner in guilt. And then the righteous anger in Judah's breast softened into pity, and nobody was burned ! Long ages after, when other men in analogous circumstances were shouting, "Stone her !" Jesus recalled this incident in the record of His own ancestry, and quietly said : "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her " ; and again the assumed righteousness softened into a self-conscious feeling that had some savour of salvation in it ! In the sequel twin sons were born to Judah, of whom the elder, Perez, became second chief of his tribe, and received, along with his mother, an honoured place in the pedigree of Christ. Thus by her desperate expedient Tamar saved the tribe of Judah from extinction at a critical point in its history, and is named as one of the mothers of our Lord.

2. THE STORY OF RAHAB is better known.

She was a native of Jericho in the days before the Exodus, and had established herself in the city as the keeper of a small inn, where she entertained and saved the two spies sent by Joshua to view the land. She is always referred to in Scripture as "Rahab the harlot," and many attempts have been made to whitewash her character. But they have been as unnecessary as they have been unsuccessful. From all we know about her she seems to have been a reformed character before she is introduced to us, making a livelihood partly by keeping lodgers and partly by spinning flax. Moreover, in some way or other she had come to know about the God of the Jews, and to believe in Him ; for in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews she is named as one of the heroines of faith. How that faith moved her to hide the spies from their pursuers among the flax on the roof of her house, how she helped them to escape in the darkness by letting them down with a scarlet line through a window in the city wall, and how she bound the same scarlet cord in her casement as a plea for the salvation of herself and her father's house, is told with many a touch of old world interest in the early chapters of Joshua. At the fall of Jericho, Rahab and all her relations were saved, and soon after, in presence of Joshua

and the chiefs of Israel, a popular wedding was celebrated in the camp at Gilgal, at which Rahab was the happy bride, and there is more than a suspicion that Salmon, the bridegroom, was one of the spies whom she had saved. Thus Rahab became the mother of Boaz whose wealth and greatness and goodness are idealised in the Book of Ruth. And so the romance of our Lord's earthly ancestry deepens. Tamar, in addition to saving the tribe of Judah, brought the first heathen strain into our Lord's descent. Now Rahab links the Amorite race in an irrefutable relationship with the coming Messiah!

3. NEXT AMONG THE MOTHERS OF CHRIST COMES RUTH, with a charm all her own. Sweet and modest as a summer flower, we first see her bending in tender sympathy over the sick-bed of Elimelech, her father-in-law, or weeping in sorrow by the untimely grave of her own lost husband, and then clinging to Naomi in her widowhood with a wealth of affection unsurpassed by any of the heroines of holy writ. Choosing the God of Israel as her God, she accompanied Naomi to Bethlehem, where we soon find her busy among the gleaners in the sun-flooded harvest-fields of Boaz, who, hearing of all her kindness to the living and to

the dead, redeemed her from widowhood, and led her, as the wife of his choice, to his lordly mansion. Now, Ruth was a Moabitess ; and the Moabites were a race hated by the Hebrews, and a special law stood in their statute-book making it illegal for a Moabite to enter into the assembly of the Lord : "even to the tenth generation," so runs the rubric, "shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of the Lord for ever." And yet Ruth, in spite of the law, not only comes into "the assembly of the Lord," but into the pedigree of the Saviour. Her case has the additional interest that the Moabites were the descendants of Lot the nephew of Abraham ; so that in Ruth, the widowed and lovely daughter of an excommunicated people, we have the reconciliation of long-estranged brethren. For she gives the Moabites an interest in Bethlehem, where she becomes the mother of a dynasty of kings which began with the reign of her great-grandson David and culminated in the birth, also at Bethlehem, of "great David's greater Son."

4. BATHSHEBA IS THE FOURTH WOMAN named in the genealogy of Jesus. A woman of great personal beauty, she attracted the notice of David, who, in order to legalise his marriage with her, gave orders to place her

husband Uriah in the forefront of the battle, where he fell fighting for the king who had planned his death. How far Bathsheba herself was a party to the plot we have no means of knowing ; but the intrigue throws a lurid light on the moral standard of the times, and paints a dark spot on the escutcheon of David which neither his tears nor his greatness can obliterate. Prior to her marriage with David, Bathsheba had been the wife of a Hittite officer in the army ; and as marriages with the heathen were discouraged, if not forbidden, it is more than probable that she herself was also a Hittite. In any case the thread that leads by ordinary descent to the Saviour of the world goes back to Bathsheba, where it touches another fringe of the heathen world and gives the great Hittite race an interest in Christ. Bathsheba became the mother of Solomon, the most famous of Jewish kings, and thus gained a place in the honourable line.

5. LAST IN THE LIST COMES MARY. She is the most blessed among women. To have been the mother of Jesus is an honour beyond which honour has no meaning. We invest her with no superior sanctity such as has led many not only to canonize, but even to worship her. She was a woman like other women, albeit she was chosen to this

distinction, that she should be the mother of our Lord. When first she is introduced to us Mary is living in humble life in the little town of Nazareth, the affianced bride of Joseph the carpenter. Here, under the parental roof, the angel Gabriel announced to her that she had been chosen to be the human medium in the incarnation of the Son of God. Greatly trembling and but little understanding the Divine message, she put herself into the hands of God, saying : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word." From that day forward Mary's life was not like that of other women. She was at once the gladdest and the saddest of her sex, as in due course we shall learn ; meantime we note the peculiarity that she is announced as a woman who shall be a Virgin Mother, and give birth to a Son whose only father is God.

The mystery of what has been called the immaculate conception need not detain us here longer than to remark that it is no more mysterious than any other supernatural event. It is on all fours with the resurrection, with the making of the worlds, and with the evolution of mind on a material stage, and is an essential element in the Christian revelation. But of this more anon. The story of Mary, like that of the other

women named in His genealogy, awakens our interest because of the light it throws on the human nature of Christ and on the methods God adopts in revealing His purposes to man.

Listening now to these echoes from the ancestry of Christ, they tell us three things which help us to understand the wonderful catholicity and sympathy of our Saviour. First: "Christ after the flesh" was not a pure Jew. He had natural relations with many of the heathen peoples surrounding Palestine. Despite the Mosaic legislation, and the efforts of Hebrew patriots to keep the Abrahamic seed pure, it became, not tainted, but enriched, by strains of Gentile blood, introduced into the very line of which Christ was born.

Second: "Christ after the flesh" was literally the friend of sinners. Outstanding as Tamar and Rahab and Bathsheba may have been in courage, or wisdom, or beauty, they were not the type of heroine we should have included in this illustrious pedigree. But God writes history, and hence we have this proof that Christ, Himself "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," was through His human ancestry connected with men and women as conspicuous for their

breaches of the moral law as they were renowned for the deeds which give them a place in history.

Third : Christ had a natural sympathy with man such as the pure Jew never had. Against this is the apparent limitation of His earthly ministry to Jewish territory and His saying : "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His sympathy was universal nevertheless. He did not, and could not, refuse the request of the distressed compatriot of Tamar when she appealed to Him. With the narrowness of Jewish theology He had nothing in common. His spirit was antagonistic to the Jewish idea of the Sabbath, of prayer, of fasting, of tithing, of the letter of Scripture and of that pride of Abrahamic descent which led the Jews to treat the Samaritans as enemies and the Gentiles as dogs. And in this expansive sympathy we can see, ideally at least, the influence of His ancestry. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba each linked Him with a heathen tribe as Mary linked Him with the Jews. He was Judean by birth, Egyptian by sojourn, Galilean by training, human rather than Hebrew in all His sympathies, the Son of Man and Saviour of the world.

III

JOSEPH AND MARY

“Mary had been betrothed to Joseph.”—MATT. i. 18.

WE have two genealogies of Jesus in the New Testament, one given by Matthew and the other by Luke. The latter traces the ascent of Jesus through Adam up to God, thus showing that He was Son of Man and Son of God, both human and Divine. The former is less ambitious, and traces the descent of Jesus from Abraham through David and Joseph to Mary, proving Him chiefly to be the son of David, and therefore of royal lineage and dignity. Neither register gives all the names in the pedigree, but only those necessary to establish the point the writer had in view; and as a consequence they differ widely in some parts in respect of the names mentioned. Much learning has been spent on these lists of names in order to show

that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, while Luke gives that of Mary, though he omits the woman's name in deference to Greek etiquette, since his treatise was addressed privately to a Greek nobleman. And this theory is more probable than any other that has been suggested. Joseph was the son of Jacob ; Mary was the daughter of Heli ; both were descendants of the royal house of David. Matthew gives the legal and official list necessary to establish the legal right of Jesus to sit on David's throne ; Luke gives rather the private and domestic list which shows to which family He actually belongs. Thus legally through Joseph and actually through Mary the royalty of Jesus is established.

Leaving now these questions of our Lord's ancestry, let us turn to those deeper human interests which circle round Joseph and Mary to whose care the infant years of Jesus were committed. Though the heirs to a throne, this worthy pair spent their life in the hard but happy circumstances of honest toil. Joseph, as we have seen, was the village carpenter at Nazareth, engaged in making such articles as the husbandman needed in the field or the housewife in her kitchen, and in the erection or repair of such houses in the neighbourhood as were built of timber.

Mary too was of the same village, living at home with her parents, and employed in all those healthy pursuits which fell to the lot of a country girl. She knew that, of all the young men of Nazareth, Joseph the carpenter was the flower, exemplary in character, just in his thoughts and generous in nature even to a fault. What was better, she knew that the carpenter loved her, and intended one day to take her to share his home. We can picture them meeting often in the village street, and exchanging happy words and greetings, or, when the day's work was done, lingering by the village well, speaking of the future they were to share. At the synagogue, too, on the quiet Sabbath days, they were thrown together in that fellowship of worship which is one of the strongest bonds in a common love, for Mary was come of a religious family, and had relations even in the priesthood. Thus their love deepened in the atmosphere of a simple life till time brought round the prospect of an early marriage. The betrothal ceremony was accordingly performed with due solemnity and social joy, and all Nazareth knew that in a few months hence Joseph and Mary would be husband and wife. Specially happy were those days to Mary, and fain would we lengthen them, for all too soon will the shadow of the cross

mingle sorrow and tears with the maiden's joy ! Not for her is the simple peace of wedded love, for the Lord hath need of her in a higher sphere, and, like all who are highly favoured by Him, she must suffer to serve.

The public engagement of Joseph and Mary was still news in the village when the messenger of God announced to the bride the extraordinary experience through which she must pass : "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee ; wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." At once perplexed and overjoyed by the revelation she had received, Mary resolved to disclose her secret to her cousin Elisabeth, who, as the angel declared, had herself been the subject of a similar visitation. Elisabeth's home was eighty miles distant in the hill country of Judea ; and so it was arranged that before her marriage Mary should pay a long visit to her cousin there. The journey would occupy about four days, and when the two women met, there were mutual congratulations and devout rejoicings such as the marvellous tidings justified. The visit extended over three months, probably until after John the Baptist, Elisabeth's son, was born. Then Mary returned to Nazareth, there to face the first real grief of her life.

A few weeks after she got back from Judea suspicions hard to explain away began to fall upon Mary, and evil tongues began to suggest to Joseph acts of deceit and infidelity on the part of his betrothed. Joseph was driven to his wits' end with anxiety. He was informed of the angel's visit and the Divine message, but was wholly incredulous. Such a thing could not be. She had been unfaithful to him. He could never marry her. And Mary passed under a cloud which no human power could disperse. The Scriptures say little about the matter; yet who can estimate the anguish to the estranged lovers covered by the statement of Matthew: "Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily"? "Was minded to put her away"! What an experience may grow up in a man's heart in making up his mind to such a step! To have one's trust betrayed, to have the fountain of love embittered, to have the hope of years destroyed, to have the cherished cup of joy dashed in shatters to the ground, till a man feels justified in repudiating that which he loved the most, is worse than death! Little wonder that Joseph broods moodily over the bench by day and tosses nightly on his restless pillow! "Was minded to put

her away " ! What anguish these words hide for Mary ! She indeed has the consciousness that all is well. She is learning that she must sacrifice all earthly happiness for the higher happiness of resigning herself to the will of God. Yet she is but a girl, and to be suspected, to have her word and honour doubted by the man she would die for, was like having the sun stricken from the sky, leaving her alone in a sunless world ! Those were awful days to Mary. Only once again, as she stood by the cross of Calvary more than thirty years after, did a like sword pierce her heart. The one experience was the beginning, the other the end, of her days of sorrow.

As Joseph lay restless one night on his pillow the unpleasant dreams which had disturbed him so long gave place to a vision of brightness which changed the whole situation for them both. The angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said : " Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." Mary's first trial was over. Upbraiding himself for his unbelief, Joseph hastened to communicate

his vision to Mary, the marriage took place almost immediately, and the humble pair settled down under a propitious sky in their own home in Nazareth.

A few months, however, had hardly passed when Joseph was summoned to attend at his own city, Bethlehem, to have his name placed on the public register with a view to taxation. This town was seventy miles away to the south, and as it would take Joseph some time to get there and back, they resolved to go together and make the city of David, for a time at least, their home. Several considerations influenced them in this decision. The fact that Joseph had condoned Mary's supposed infidelity naturally threw suspicion on them both as partners in the wrongdoing, for though the truth had been made known, it received but little credence in Nazareth. By removing to Bethlehem they would withdraw themselves, therefore, from the criticisms of unsympathetic neighbours. That this consideration influenced them little, is proved by the fact that they subsequently returned to Nazareth and made their abode there: a step they would hardly have taken had the suspicions under which they lay been well founded. They were more influenced by the fact that Bethlehem was the appropriate place for the birth of Christ, but most

of all by the leadings of that Divine Providence which has more to do than we reckon with every human action. Arrived at their journey's end, there was no room for them in the inn, the unusual influx of visitors for the census having already crowded every available room. And so, like many others, wearied with their journey, they found shelter in a stable; and there Jesus, Son of God and son of Mary, was born.

We may now return to the question: Is this account of the conception and birth of Christ credible? Can it be believed that He had no earthly father? We answer in the affirmative. It is credible, because it has been accepted with confidence by many in all ages who have been quite as able to weigh the evidence as any now living. It can be believed, because many still believe it, and that after considering the arguments of the learned on the negative side. The fact is that by the methods of modern scholarship, these arguments have been brought to such a pitch of perfection that their impotence is more readily apparent than it used to be. There is no argument against the New Testament account of the incarnation of Jesus save the argument which assumes the impossibility of the supernatural. And there is no reason for doubting the truth

of the Gospel records in the matter, save dislike of the supernatural. If, for example, Christ had ever betrayed any sign of sin or moral weakness, there might have arisen some necessity for doubting His supernatural birth, but the admitted sinlessness of Jesus leaves no reason to doubt His unique character as the Son of God, or to suspect that Matthew and Luke were writing mythology. Let it be clearly understood, then, that the objection to the supernatural birth of Jesus is not primarily a question of the veracity of the Gospels, or a necessary result of legitimate literary criticism, but an objection to the miraculous element connected with it. Let it be also clearly understood that the same objection is urged against all miracle, and that if the objection is sustained the true Divinity of Christ, the resurrection, the ascension, and the continued life of Christ are all a beautiful dream, and the resurrection of the believer and his future glory a mere figment of the imagination. But the objection cannot be sustained on the evidence except by imagining conditions which never existed, impugning the intelligence of reputable witnesses, inventing inventors of myths and legends, wrecking without mercy the reputation of saints and apostles, and outraging the intuitive instincts and aspirations

of the human mind. And when all is done it leaves Christ to be accounted for. He is the best answer to all objections. As we know Him He is a greater miracle than any event connected with His history.

That Jesus Christ had no earthly father is a perfectly credible fact. And all the statements of Scripture, the aspirations of man, the visions of prophets, the Christian theories of New Testament writers, harmonise so well with the fact, and are so consistent in view of the fact, that any other supposition leaves Christianity in chaos and Christ unexplained.

Mary was the mother towards the evolution of whom all the aspirations and ambitions of consecrated womanhood had been working for millenniums. We do not insist on a physical evolution, though in the choice of a medium for such an extraordinary event as the incarnation of the promised Messiah it is consonant with the Divine wisdom that unique preparation should be made. The body of Jesus bulks large in the gospel. It was the organ of the Divine manifestation. He bare our sins in it ; through the offering of it we are sanctified ; it was broken for us ; it furnished the only physical evidence we possess of His death, burial, resurrection, and

ascension. "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body didst Thou prepare Me." The history of the body of Jesus from its conception to its ascension is the history of a body prepared for unique uses; and so consistent is that history as a whole and in detail, that special circumstances connected with its advent are not only reasonable, but naturally necessary. That His mother, therefore, should be subject to unique physical conditions is an expectation so reasonable that it can be destroyed only by the belief that not even in giving His "only begotten Son" to the world, could God make special preparation for the event.

But the evolution we speak of was an evolution of the ideal mother. With the beginning of human society sin made its appearance, and men became aware that they had entered on an age-long conflict with evil, from which, after many a fall and bruise, they would emerge more than conquerors. In the graphic idealism of Genesis these facts are set forth in the account of the temptation of Eve by the serpent, and her consequent fall and forgiveness, followed by the assurance that while the serpent should bite the heel of man, man should ultimately crush the head of the serpent. "I will put enmity

between thee and the woman," thus God speaks to the serpent, "and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus the woman and the woman's seed came early into prominence in connection with the conflict with sin ; and it henceforth became the ambition of every mother to bear sons who should be the destroyers of evil. Experience, however, soon proved that it was no ordinary man who should crush the serpent, or, in other words, deal effectively with sin. The Saviour must be of an extraordinary character. And so in the poetry of domestic life, in the visions of religious prophecy, the promised seed of the woman became idealised ; and, as time advanced, the idea gained in substance until the Messiah, the Virgin's Son of the Hebrew prophets, the revelation of the Christ to be, approached completion. And side by side with this progressive revelation of the coming Saviour the mother whose son He should be became idealised also. Towards her dignity all the higher aspirations of womanhood, consciously or unconsciously, tended, until they culminated in Mary ; and with the birth of her Son began the reign of the Divine Man who was to take away the sin of the world.

We must now note the significance of four

events which followed in succession after His birth. First came the visit of the shepherds. These were humble, simple men and representatives of the common people. They were the first to honour and worship the worth and greatness of the Saviour; the first also to spread abroad the joyful news of His birth. They received intimation of the event by direct revelation; and being "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," they hastened to His cradle in order to submit themselves to their redeeming Lord. They had nothing to give save loyal hearts and loving service, and that they gave early, leaving us an example to follow their lead. First worship, and then witness-bearing, and both early. He is worthy for whom we should do this.

Secondly, the circumcision. When Jesus was eight days old, Joseph and Mary had Him circumcised according to the law. Their knowledge of His extraordinary character did not suggest the omission of this rite. The ideal of His work made the rite necessary. All the Old Testament prophecies went to show that when Messiah came He would fulfil the law, He would "magnify the law and make it honourable." In the circumcision we see Jesus being placed under the law. By His circumcision He

becomes a debtor to do the whole law—a debt which He discharged in His after-life. Moreover, by this rite He became legally the heir to the Abrahamic promise, became, in law as well as in pedigree, the seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

Thirdly, redeeming the Redeemer. On the fortieth day after His birth, Joseph and Mary made a journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of presenting the child to the Lord in the temple. The reason for this act was most impressive. Every first-born child was claimed by God, and in order that it might be spared, its life had to be redeemed by a suitable offering made at the appointed time. Mary thus redeemed the Redeemer. She offered two turtle doves as a sanctifying offering, and paid the redemption money prescribed by the law. It is to be observed that two quite distinct rites are here mentioned. The turtle doves were Mary's own offering for her own purification, and had to be repeated after the birth of every subsequent child, whether male or female. And it throws light on the circumstances of Mary, since it is the offering prescribed for the poor. The presentation of the child was an altogether different matter. It was not, as many have supposed, a voluntary dedica-

tion on Mary's part of her child to the Lord. It was not a dedicating rite in any sense. It was the redeeming of an already dedicated child from death. The first-born males of the flock had all to be offered in sacrifice. The first-born males among unclean but useful animals, such as the ass, had either to be redeemed by a lamb or else have their necks broken. No first-born male unredeemed could live, because it was dedicated to the Lord by its very primogeniture. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple, therefore, it was under this law, and in order to redeem Him from death. It was a ceremony observed only in the case of first-born males. To the Jew it could have had no meaning in the case of a daughter or a second son. Mary brought Jesus to the temple to redeem Him. She did not bring any of His brothers, James or Joseph, or Simon or Judas. The theory, therefore, of a dedication service for children based on the example of Joseph and Mary proceeds on a misunderstanding of the rite. It is redemption, and not consecration, which is the leading thought in this act of instructive symbolism. The rite connects itself historically with the Exodus. The family is redeemed from death in the first-born son. And in the redemption of Christ, who is "the first-born among many

brethren," the redemption of the human family from death is set forth : a redemption to be still more graphically displayed on the cross.

After receiving the blessing of Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary returned home, over the twelve rough miles which separated Bethlehem and Jerusalem, there to receive in due time the visit of the wise men from the East. These wise men, unlike the shepherds, received no revelation from heaven, but came to the Saviour slowly, with many a deduction from science and many an inquiry from man. They sought Him first in kings' courts ; and when they found Him not, aided by Scripture and their guiding star they came to Bethlehem, where they found the young child with Mary His mother, and worshipped Him. Unlike the shepherds, the wise men brought with them "gifts most rare" : gold and frankincense and myrrh ; and above all laid the homage of wisdom and learning at the feet of the new-born King. Connecting itself with this visit of the wise men is the massacre of the children ordered by the jealous Herod, to whom the distinction belongs of being the first enemy and persecutor of Jesus. Poor Herod ! if he had only known, Christ would never have interfered with his kingdom. But selfishness, as always, is blind, and over-

reaches itself. The angel of the Lord reached Bethlehem before the messengers of the king ; and the persecuted family were safe on their way to Egypt, where they found refuge till the death of Herod, when they returned to Nazareth, for ever associated with the happiest years of Joseph and Mary and their illustrious charge.

IV

THE HOME AT NAZARETH

“Nazareth, where He had been brought up.”—
LUKE iv. 16.

WHEN Joseph and Mary returned from Egypt they took up their abode in Nazareth; and there Jesus spent twenty-eight years of His life. During that period we see Him only once, when He was a boy of twelve. Still there are many things said about Him in His memoirs which enable us to realise that He grew like other children, that He was an obedient child, precocious and intelligent beyond His years, an intensely interesting child whose manner, disposition, and attainments made Him a likeable child, beloved by all. These obscure years were the years of His education for His great ministry and work; and it will more than repay our pains to study carefully what indications we have of how He spent them.

Of all His schools and schoolmasters, the home at Nazareth, and the anxious, loving souls who trained Him there, stand easily first. A good home is always the first and best school. Joseph, as we have seen, could offer his wife no richer home than that of an honest working man. Luxuries were few, and cares and anxieties common enough in that, as in every such home ; but there was also true love and religion within the cottage walls, so that there was no lack of happiness and peace at home. Moreover, all things considered, no better school could have been found in which to train the Saviour in those common human experiences which afterwards gave Him such unfeigned sympathy with men.

A Hebrew cottage home had many advantages for Jesus. There is more breadth and depth of life in a cottage than in a palace. The higher we ascend in the social scale, the narrower and the more artificial do our modes of life become ; because the greater the number of luxuries we are able to indulge in, the fewer are the demands we make on the simple resources of Nature. Christ Himself declares that " they which are gorgeously apparelled and live delicately, are in king's courts." They are not exposed to the stern realities of life like other men.

They have indeed advantages and experiences of their own which most other men envy, but which are not always conducive to the highest happiness. Dives, for example, lived in an isolated house surrounded by conservative walls furnished with protective gates which he was tempted to bar against the whole clamant, importunate, pity-moving brotherhood of Lazarus. He could live far apart from the world of coarse clothes and crumbs. He had access to the artificial comforts and pleasures of life, and could shut out from his circumscribed world many of the unpleasant sights and sounds which others must endure. He had those advantages. On the other hand, he could not taste the sweets of toil, nor attain unto that inestimable soul-culture which a life of hardship alone can win. The fruits of sympathy and sacrifice do not ripen in the garden where chief attention is given to the growth of the attractive flowers of ease and selfish pleasure. And so his life ended less happily than that of the beggar who sat at his gate. Luxury, except when accompanied with special grace, is fatal to the highest form of character. And thus the Divine Wisdom placed Jesus as the foster-son of a village carpenter rather than as the scion of a royal court, in order to give Him the widest

possible experience of human needs and develop in Him the highest qualities of a noble soul.

In the pious home at Nazareth, therefore, Jesus received His first lessons in that holy religion which has for its vital principle reverence for the only living and true God. We have already seen that Joseph and Mary were themselves devoutly religious. They most carefully fulfilled all the requirements of the law when the child was born ; and we have abundant proof that they bestowed equal care on His subsequent training. If we could conjure up a picture of the actual house under whose roof the youth of Jesus was passed, we should note, painted, or carved on the entrance gate and the door-posts, portions of the sacred Scriptures put there in prominence for the benefit of the children, so that they might early know the law. Jesus could never pass through the gates of His Hebrew home without having before His eyes the words of the Lord.

In one sense Jesus was intuitively religious and knew deeper things than can be learned from human lips ; just as there have been some men who, despite adverse surroundings at home, have become devout Christians by virtue of an inward disposition which must ever rank as a Divine gift. Jesus had this

gift in a degree surpassing all the sons of men. He had a genius for religion, a devout cast of mind, a predilection for righteousness and a spiritual illumination absolutely unique. So striking is this feature of His character, that we see at once He could not have derived it by heredity from any earthly parentage. Neither was it the evolution of a similar genius which may be supposed to have been developing historically through His predecessors. It manifestly could not be the result of special culture. Christ's peculiar religious genius cannot be explained on any principle of human heredity, historical evolution, or special education. It can be explained only by the incarnation, and by the words in which His Divine origin was revealed to His mother : " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee ; wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy : the Son of God." The inner light He possessed was the light He brought to earth from His Father in heaven ; and it was His alone.

But notwithstanding this inner disposition Jesus required to be taught religion like other children ; and for this education He found the cottage home at Nazareth the best of schools. He was there living in an atmo-

sphere of devotion. Morning and night, Joseph, in obedience to the law, read from the Scriptures with the object of instructing his family, while Mary, with finer instinct and more hallowed effects than any of the rabbis could have done, explained all the harder passages to her beloved Son. Mary knew more of the mystery of His mission than any other living soul. She had stored up in her heart all the words of revelation regarding Him. She was therefore specially fitted to teach Him.

It is doubtful if Mary ever related to her Son the circumstances of His birth. The note that she kept certain revelations and pondered them in her heart, and the fact that Christ never refers to the incidents of His infancy, point to her silence on these subjects. That she trained Him in view of them is beyond dispute. We can see them often together, during the peaceful years of His childhood, as teacher and scholar. She told Him, with many a graphic comment and sympathetic detail, the history of the Jewish people and God's dealings with them, till He knew it by heart and understood it better than His teacher. Like other children, He listened eager-eyed and thoughtful to the incidents of the Bible. But while others liked best the stories of Joseph and his

brethren, or of David and Goliath because of the tragedy in them, Jesus was most interested in the story of the promised Messiah : the suffering Servant of Jehovah. The peculiarity of Jesus was that suffering and sacrifice for others had an irresistible fascination for Him ; and there is evidence that very early in His life the Messiah had become the Hero of His dreams. Mary could not fail to identify her Son with the coming One ; and He too guessed the secret. She taught Him many other lessons ; but the idea of suffering possessed Him. That determined every other religious question. The Messiah was the Hero of His dreams and guided Him in every duty. That Jesus had an intimate knowledge of household duties, and that He must have often assisted in their performance, is a fact abundantly proved by the incidents and parables of the New Testament which everywhere reflect the thoroughness of this part of His home training. Moreover, as He served He reflected and saw spiritual analogies in the common operations of daily life, and afterwards used them to illustrate some of the deepest things in His teaching. Though the records pass over the years of His youth in comparative silence, they nevertheless throw wide the cottage door and show us the coming Saviour of the world engaged

in many acts of helpful service ; an example and inspiration to all. We can see Him, for instance, actively busying Himself in the following duties during His boyhood and youth :—

I. HELPING WITH THE CHILDREN. Jesus was the first-born child of a large family. Besides Himself there were in the house four younger brothers : James and Joseph and Simon and Judas. He had probably an equal number of sisters, since the people of Nazareth, who knew the family well, were justified in asking : “ And His sisters, are they not all with us ? ” He was thus a member of an ideal family where the eldest child by the necessities of the case is early called upon to help. And this Jesus did with all His heart and might. He had a remarkable love for children such as only those who try to help them can ever acquire. And children had a remarkable love for Him. It was in His own boyhood at Nazareth that He acquired this love as He sought to relieve His mother of the care of His younger brothers and sisters when she was weary. And so wherever in later life the man Christ Jesus is found children are never far away. They cluster round Him in His teaching, they clamber on His knee, they delight to be raised high in His arms, they supply Him

with object-lessons for His disciples, and they shout "Hosanna!" in His train. He always befriended the children, He revered their innocence and gave them the highest place in His kingdom. He began by helping the children in His own childhood; and now in His Saviourhood He still continues the same gracious ministry.

2. THE BAKING OF BREAD. Whatever part Jesus actually took in this operation He was familiar at least with the whole process. He watched His mother take the three measures of meal and hide the yeast in it before setting it away to "rise." It is more than likely that He would on occasion knead for her, or prepare the fire for the baking. Be that as it may, He noted the change slowly and silently produced by the leaven, and how the whole of the meal was ultimately turned into dough. And as He watched, He dreamed that He Himself was hiding in the heart of the world the active principle of the new life: the leaven of righteousness; and that He saw it, like the yeast in the meal, slowly, silently, but surely spreading to the remotest bounds of the earth, and transforming all men into loyal subjects of the kingdom of heaven. That ultimately the whole of mankind should be converted by His influence, was a vital hope with Jesus;

and He recognised the principle of the conversion in the assimilating virtue of the leaven in the meal.

3. GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS. When among the glades of Gadara He said to His disciples, "Gather up the broken pieces that remain over, that nothing be lost," He threw considerable light on the habits in the cottage at Nazareth. It was not the speech of an economist bent on making money ; for that never had any attraction for Christ. It was the speech of one trained under the stern necessities of a household of independent spirit but slender means, whose members have been taught the value of every crust. But this training had still more far-reaching results in the case of Jesus. The word "lost" was a terrible word to Him whether applied simply to the means of life or to life itself ; and He carried this thought of saving the lost into His ministry in the world. Even the fragments of humanity are precious to Him. Broken down men and women, the outcasts and the prodigals of society He always sought to rescue in the days of His flesh ; and in carrying on His work in the world His command to His disciples still is, "Gather up the broken pieces that remain over, that nothing be lost."

4. MAKING THE INSIDE CLEAN.

Among the operations of the kitchen one of the commonest is the washing up of the various utensils used in the cooking and eating of food. And one of the hardest lessons for a child to learn when first introduced to this duty is the necessity of making the inside of the cup and platter clean. Mary, like all good mothers, would have no slipshod work in this matter, but taught her household the value of inner cleanness; and among her children none was more quick to learn, nor ready to appreciate the value of the lesson, than Jesus. The principle of this home lesson He carried into His wider ministry, and based on it one of the deepest thoughts of His teaching. Christianity is the religion of the inside of things. If the heart is pure the life will be pure also. Christ was no longer thinking of the kitchen when He cried, "Cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also." He was thinking of the hearts of men and laying down the order and the law of human regeneration.

5. **BOTTLING WINE.** The cottage would have its vineyard as similar cottages with us have their potato-patch, sufficient to supply the needs of the family. And when the grapes were trodden in the wine-press, the

boy would have His share in the work ; and it may have been—who can tell ?—that the meaning of an old prophecy may have become clearer to Him as He pressed the purple fruit : “I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the peoples there was no man with Me.” But that belongs to the field rather than to the home. Jesus soon learned that last year’s wine-skins were no use for this year’s vintage. To put new wine in an old bottle encouraged fermentation, and fermented liquors nearly always play mischief whether poured into old skins or new ! New wine had to be put into new bottles, fresh and elastic, so that both bottles and wine might be preserved. Christ learned more than He was taught. He saw that Christianity was a new vintage, and that no forms which had been used to contain other religions could be of any service to Him in giving this new wine to the world. A fermented Christianity would be a calamity. He must build a Church free from the taint of exhausted religions. To pour Christianity into the empty bottles of Judaism was the surest way to destroy both. It was inattention to this fact which led to the corruption of the religion of Jesus in the early centuries when unenlightened friends of the new faith poured it into old pagan forms

and destroyed its New Testament simplicity. Christianity is a new vintage.

6. PATCHING GARMENTS. Every boy is familiar with this operation, though nowadays he leaves the actual work to his mother and sisters. But it is interesting to note that Christ tells us that in His day men did the patching of their own garments. It is thus no stretch of the imagination to picture Mary teaching her Son how to use the needle and thread, and how to select the cloth suitable for the particular rent to be mended, so that He might not be dependent on others when an accident happened. And it might not prove a bad arrangement to-day if it were made a law of family life that those who rend the garments should also mend them.

Christ used His knowledge of this household duty to teach men the great lesson that there must be no patch-work in His kingdom. Patching in a literal sense, in a large and poor family is a necessity, and when old cloth is put to old cloth an advantage is reaped. But in the Christian household there must be no attempt made to patch the old rags of self-righteousness. They must be entirely put away, for any attempt simply to mend them results in clothing the man with hypocrisy. A patched

character may be worse than a bad one. The subjects of the kingdom of heaven should therefore have nothing to do with patching, for it is their privilege to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and wear the garments of salvation beautiful and seamless like Christ's own robe.

7. FEET-WASHING. Nothing that Christ ever did shows His humiliation better than the washing of His disciples' feet. Paul was thinking of this suggestive event when he wrote regarding Christ that He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." And when we remember that the servant here was really a slave, the action is all the more significant. Look at the picture. It is the fatal night of the betrayal. Christ and the twelve have met in the upper room to eat the Last Supper. They have just come in from the dusty roads with soiled feet and are all feeling the discomfort incident to their condition, but there is no slave on the premises to bring the customary water and wash their feet. No disciple would stoop to such a menial service, yet all felt the need of it. There was an awkward feeling among the twelve. Christ was gently watching them and all the while deeply engaged in thought-reading. Quietly laying aside His loose upper garment, He took a large towel

and bound it about His waist, scarf fashion, so that one end would hang ready for use, went in search of a basin, filled it with water, and when these preparations were completed, He began to wash His disciples' feet. The action speaks of more than appears on the surface. By every touch in His preparations and every turn of His skilful hand we can see that this is not the first time He has rendered such service, but that He was reverting to one of the habits of helpfulness He had acquired in His childhood's home. He is the living picture of an Oriental slave, and the guise becomes Him well! For to Christ no service is menial, and every act by which one can help another is kingly, while the lowliest in mind are highest in heaven.

Many other illustrations of how carefully He had been trained in His cottage home will readily occur to those familiar with the Bible. Thus He knew how to make a fire, broil fish, sweep and garnish a room, or search among the furniture for a lost coin. And what are the folded grave-clothes found neatly laid by themselves on the shelf of the sepulchre on the resurrection day but a reminiscence of the careful and methodical training He had received in the home at Nazareth? The influence of the home

training of Jesus upon His teaching and action is very marked. Priceless is such a training to any child, for it lays the foundation of the great grace of taking thought for others, it trains the eye to see opportunities of helping in a thousand little ways, it prevents the vice of that unlovely selfishness which always expects to be waited upon from ever taking root in the heart, and prepares the child for the harder lessons he will have to learn in other schools and from other masters.

V

THE CARPENTER'S SHOP

“Is not this the carpenter ?”—MARK vi. 3.

WAS Jesus, in the popular sense of to-day, a working man? Many seem to believe that He was. We have seen it asserted in print that if Jesus had lived in our day He would have been a trades-unionist, paying His shilling a week into a carpenter's society, for the protection of labour against capital. That He had unbounded sympathy with the labouring classes, and that He was opposed to every form of tyranny and oppression is a self-evident proposition. But a moment's reflection will show that He never could have acted in the way suggested. Under the existing system of competition and rivalry, not only between masters and men, but between master and master, and man and man, combinations for class purposes may

have been beneficial. The legitimacy, the necessity even of such unions may meantime be freely granted, because the question now is, not the attitude of the working man to such unions, but the attitude of Christ. To think of Jesus of Nazareth as ever resorting to the power of money, or any other material instrument, for His own benefit, or for the benefit of His own class as against some other person or class, is to betray the grossest ignorance of Christ's character, and of the fundamental idea of His mission. He came to suffer wrong, and to teach all men to suffer wrong, in order that ultimately wrong might cease to be done. As we have seen, self-sacrifice, and not self-interest, was the guiding principle of His life. He came to die, as much for the tyrant as for the slave, and to give Himself for the Pharisee equally with the publican, without respect of persons. The moment we conceive of Christ as a partisan, the moment we assign Him to a class, He ceases to be the representative Man, and sinks to the level of a party leader. He can no more be rated as a working man than He can be claimed as a university professor, an itinerant evangelist, or a simple martyr for truth.

Moreover, it ought to be noticed that, while we do see Him actually engaged in

teaching students, in preaching to the multitude, and in dying for the truth, we never once see Him actually engaged in manual labour. Never once in the New Testament do we find Jesus handling a tool of any kind. He is never once seen even handling an oar, or assisting in drawing a net. Two things we read of Him making : a whip of small cords wherewith to drive the money-changers from His Father's house, and clay wherewith to open a blind man's eyes. We see Him once engaged in washing His disciples' feet. He probably made a fire on the shores of Galilee to comfort His disciples after their night of fruitless toil. But none of these acts belong to the category of manual labour. There are men who are nothing else but working men, in the class sense, just as there are masters who are nothing else but employers of labour. We shall see directly that Christ had no kinship with them, and that the Christian man should have no kinship with them either.

We must not on these grounds presume, however, that Christ never worked at the carpenter's bench. We have already cited evidence to show that Mary carefully taught Him all the domestic duties appropriate to His station in life. There is similar evidence that He learned a useful trade by which He

supported Himself and those dependent on Him up till the time that He entered on His public ministry. Mark distinctly tells us that after the death of Joseph He was known in Nazareth as "the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James." That little is said about the work He did in the carpenter's shop is easily understood, when we remember that such work was an accident, and not an essential, in His life. The means by which we earn our daily bread, provided always that they be fair and honest, ought never to be a prime factor in our life. Carey, for instance, was a shoemaker and Livingstone was a weaver ; but we should never have heard of either had he not been more than a shoemaker or a weaver. If Carey and Livingstone had never done anything but make their own bread, the world would never have asked at what trades they made it. Their life-work was in addition to their trade. It was because while working with their hands they dreamed great dreams, prepared themselves for great services, planned great blessings for man, and in thought achieved them, that incidentally their trade is named. So is it with Christ. That He was a carpenter is in itself of small moment. That while a carpenter, and over and above the work He did in the shop, He

prepared Himself for His teaching and for His cross is a great thing, showing every true man how a workman should be employed. Bearing in mind these essential truths, we are permitted to look into the workshop and see Jesus at work.

I. AND FIRST AS THE CARPENTER. We can picture to ourselves the workshop at Nazareth with Joseph at the bench as its competent master. His work would be of the general and varied kind common to all rural carpenters. Like Elisha and his students, he would have to go to the woods and fell his own timber and bring it home on his shoulder, or slung across the saddle of his sure-footed ass. Chief among the subjects of his craft would be house-building, in which he would require the assistance of other men in the heavier parts of the work. The making of household furniture, of ploughs and mattocks, too, for the surrounding farmers, would fall to his lot. Sometimes we might find him fashioning a spinning-wheel or loom for his neighbours, and occasionally engaged in the more sorrowful task of making a bier for the dead. Thus "toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing," Joseph ministered to the needs of his household, and initiated Jesus into the mysteries of a useful handicraft.

During His boyhood He would often visit

the shop and watch with what deftness Joseph did his work, or listen with delight to the music of the tools. By and by He would be allowed to assist perhaps in steadying a great plank under the saw, and so little by little serve His apprenticeship to every branch of the trade, till in the course of years Joseph begins to fade from our vision and we see "Jesus only" by the bench, where He toils and thinks till He attains the age of thirty years.

There is evidence that He had acquired such proficiency in His business as to both plan and execute His own work. He knew how to sit down and count the cost of a new house before beginning to build ; and He was expert in the knowledge of foundations, and understood the special forces that test the building, all of which He acquired under the tuition of Joseph and in His own experience as carpenter of Nazareth.

2. AS THE BREAD-WINNER. When Christ died on Calvary Joseph was already dead. The sad event occurred early in the manhood of our Lord. The last reference to him is on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years of age. The question which His fellow-citizens asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" suggests that He had held that position

sufficiently long to make any reference to His predecessor unnecessary. It has therefore been concluded that by the time Jesus reached His majority, the support of His widowed mother and younger brothers and sisters fell largely upon Him. The eldest Son is now seen in the place of the father, toiling as the bread-winner of those less able than Himself. It must have been congenial labour. Every right-thinking young man rejoices in responsibility, and in the thought that he is helpful at home. Only the selfish and the unworthy grumble at the burden and grudge the sacrifice. Jesus did neither. When His weeping mother turned to Him in her distress after the funeral, He comforted her with tender and manly words, reminding her that His arm was young and strong, and that it would be His joy to toil late and early so that none of them should want. And He did it till the day He was thirty, and His brothers all able to set Him free for higher service.

We read of Jesus being wearied ; but not by the carpenter's bench. Physical work is life and health to a man under thirty, if his heart be right. The hardship and discontent of labour is not a physical but a mental condition. The very young, the old and the sickly, may suffer from the pain of physical

exhaustion ; but the young man who is afraid to toil is wrong in his mind, and false to his manhood. There is far harder work to be done in the world than can be accomplished by joiner's tools, or even by the pen of a ready writer. Not till Jesus addressed Himself to that work did He sit wearied by the well. Never till He gave all His strength to the labour of converting scribes and Pharisees, publicans and sinners, into Christian men, never till He stood forth single-handed as the Saviour of the lost and the uncompromising opponent of the world, the flesh, and the devil, did He feel the burden of His mission. It was never the perspiration of the brow, but the bloody sweat of brain and heart, wrung forth by His effort to lift fallen men up to a higher plane of life, that wearied the man Christ Jesus. The years He spent as the bread-winner by the carpenter's bench were the happiest years of His earthly life, during which His manhood was developed and His character was confirmed in the strength of righteousness.

3. AS THE DISCIPLINED MAN. Nazareth was a town of bad reputation. So notorious was its evil fame that when Nathanael was told that the Messiah had been found there, he was incredulous and exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Those

who do not know by experience both sides of the question are apt to suppose that simplicity and virtue abide in the villages, while wickedness and crime abound in the great cities, and that, therefore, the bad name of Nazareth was exaggerated. But this supposition is not in accord with fact. Rural districts are sometimes as notorious for immorality and rough life as the biggest of cities. It is not a question of the size of the place, but of the character of the people. It was the coarse, godless ways of some of the inhabitants of Nazareth that gave it its bad reputation. And if there is evil in a place it will come out in its workshops, just as the good that is in it will certainly show itself there.

One whose experience makes him independent of any authority on this matter beyond his own knowledge, testifies that a common workshop, whether in village or town, is one of the best schools a young man can enter for the training of character. The mettle he is made of will be tested there, if anywhere. If he is of the right stuff, he will develop under its influence into a strong and trustworthy man, capable of doing the best work in the shop, and fit to fill its most responsible offices. Perhaps he will rise above it altogether, like Hugh Miller, the mason, and the great missionaries already named, and leave his

mark for good in the world in some other walk of life. On the other hand, if he is not of the right stuff, the discipline of the workshop will prove it. Under its *régime* he will take his place among the lower grades of workmen: the discontented, unambitious, eye-serving grades, whose life drifts out of touch with religion and all other civilising and elevating influences.

As a youth Jesus entered the workshop in a town of evil reputation ; and He came out of it many years after, a nobler and stronger man. During His apprenticeship we read that He “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.” And He thus advanced, not as a hot-house plant grows in its artificial environment of glass and gardeners, but as the oak matures on the hillside, exposed to every blast that blows. What temptations He encountered in the course of His employment, and how He met them, we can read in the history of any man who has sought to labour in His spirit. We have all listened to the graphic story of Noah and his carpenters, how the men willingly assisted in laying the planks of the great boat and drew wages for their work, but still continued to live in the unbelief and wickedness characteristic of their age. We have been told how they derided the “preacher of righteous-

ness" for his utopian scheme, plying him with awkward questions and godless laughter "until the flood came and took them all away." The picture has the merit of being true to human experience. The wickedness, the unbelief, the awkward question, the derision, the godless laughter, are the stock-in-trade of some men in every workshop, by which character is tested and reputations made or marred. Jesus met with these things in Nazareth. They strengthened Him and ennobled Him. By and by His fellow-workmen and neighbours learned to respect Him; for when a young man proves in the workshop that his character is incorruptible, and his religion real, he is first left alone, then respected, and finally turned to as an adviser and a refuge in times of trouble.

Having weathered the temptations of a working man's life we are not surprised that the devil himself could not corrupt the character of Jesus during a six weeks' attempt in the wilderness. For no devil is so potent to destroy a young man's life as a bad companion or a fellow-workman with an evil mind. They are among the most palpable devils we meet; and if we resist their influence successfully we are forearmed for fiercer conflicts. In the workshop Christ resisted all the evils He encountered, and

thereby raised the reputation of His native town. What an example to every workman ! What an ambition for every youth ! The school of industry is that into which the vast majority of men and women enter. It matters little what the particular branch is, the discipline is much the same in every branch. When a youth enters any workshop or place of business, he has the opportunity of raising the reputation of his native place. He has also a fair opportunity of lowering it. In the one case he follows the example of Christ and makes a man. In the other, he yields to the devil and throws his soul to the dogs.

The great lack among young men in entering a trade or profession is this lack of a worthy ambition. So many enter it simply as a means of livelihood, and are content to let that be the aim of their life. They have no worthy dreams like Christ. By the bench or the forge, the loom or the desk, they never see anything but wood and iron, and calico and paper. They have never dreamed that every true man's life-work should be over and above the art by which he lives. In the carpenter's shop at Nazareth Jesus acquired the right to say to every toiler, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; and

every workman "that needeth not to be ashamed" should, after Jesus and in his vastly more limited measure, acquire some similar right to help his fellows.

VI

NATURE

“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields.”—
JOHN iv. 35.

CHRIST was more than a carpenter. He was an observant student of Nature; and many were the lessons He learned from “field and flower and forest green.” The neighbourhood of Nazareth provided a glorious school for such an apt scholar. The village lay hid in a clough among the hills of Lower Galilee, just where they abut on the great plain of Esdraelon, and was surrounded by its patches of cornland, its olive groves, and its terraced gardens where the natives grew their fruitful and sweet-scented vines. Farther afield stretched rolling slopes of coarse herbage where the sheep fed, broken here and there by deep ravines among whose shades might be heard the murmur of water and the music

of birds ; while deeper among the solitudes of the hills were bits of Nature's wilderness, providing at one spot a playground for the wild gazelles and at another a cover for the wolf. Here, too, where the soil was favourable, bright flowers decked the sod : the modest anemone, and the graceful lily displaying their beauties side by side with thorns and thistles.

Nor did the interest end here. From the hills above Nazareth the eye commanded a wide field of historic scenery. The great plain in front southwards was the ancient battlefield of Israel ; and almost every mountain and hill in sight had been consecrated by some holy man of God. Immediately on the left rose Mount Tabor, from whose spurs Deborah sent forth her army to the overthrow of Sisera, while straight across the plain was the place where Gideon spread his fleece and, for two successive nights, prayed for a guiding sign before launching his gallant three hundred on the sleeping camp of Midian. Far to the south, on the mound that rises to the skyline was Dothan, where Joseph was sold by his brethren ; and where Elisha and his servant had their wonderful vision of the Lord's host encompassing them with salvation. That peak to the west, with the

sea gleaming beyond it, is Carmel, where, after his great sacrifice, Elijah prayed for rain, and from which he outran Ahab's chariot, in their race for Jezreel. To the front on the left was En-dor, where Saul spent his last night in consultation with a witch ; and still farther on rise the mountains of Gilboa among which his dead body was next day found.

The road that wound along the plain was the trade road from Damascus to Egypt, and had carried many a brilliant cavalcade. Up that way to the pass at Dothan came the Ishmaelite caravan, with their spices and their slaves, to purchase Joseph for thirty pieces of silver. It was down that road that Naaman turned from the house of Elisha to wash away his leprosy in the waters of Jordan ; and up that same road came thundering the chariot of Jehu on his way to avenge the blood of the prophets on the house of Ahab. It was at the bend of the road by Naboth's garden where he met the two ill-fated kings, Joram and Ahaziah, and, having chased them both to death, hurried on to the palace to hurl Jezebel headlong to her fate. The whole scenery was associated with the struggles of Israel for independence and freedom ; and had witnessed alike the magnificence and the tragedy of war. The

district embraced the scenes of Elijah's prayers and warnings, of Elisha's teaching and miracles, and there was scarcely a feature in the landscape that had not been the subject of some prophet's dirge or psalmist's hymn, lamenting the fall or celebrating the triumph of the people of God.

Such surroundings and associations could not fail to impress the expanding mind of one so imaginative and sympathetic as Jesus ; and we are not surprised that He loved the fellowship of these hills and dales and poured forth, like Elijah, His fervent prayers on the mountain tops in the midnight air. How He studied in this great school, what lessons He learned with God alone for His teacher, and how He wove the resulting threads of thought into parables of death and life, we shall now consider by taking four typical examples.

I. CHRIST AND THE CORN. With all the operations of agriculture He was familiar. We cannot read His parables without noticing how thoroughly He understood the treatment of a vineyard. The fencing, dressing, pruning of the trees, the gathering and the storage of the fruit, as well as the treatment of barren trees and withered branches, all came under His observant eye, and suggested an endless train of thoughts .

about God and His ways with men. He had, if possible, a more minute knowledge of the corn-fields which He must have acquired by personally engaging in the operations He describes. To this day in agricultural districts the village carpenter leaves the workshop in the busy seasons and takes his share in the work of the field. And it is manifest that Jesus must have followed this perfectly natural custom. He speaks with accurate knowledge about the different kinds of soil to be met with in the same field. He has the details of ploughing and sowing wholly at His command. He mentions the customs of the harvest season and the winnowing time, how the tares are separated from the wheat, the chaff from the grain, and how the refuse is committed to the fire and the wheat to the barn. He even follows the wheat to the mill, the meal to the kitchen, and that which is reserved for seed back to the basket of the sower the succeeding spring. He describes every transformation of the seed from the moment it falls into the ground till it whitens for the harvest, and every process through which the ripened grain is put till the bread stands on the table. But only incidentally ; for He refers to these transformations and processes only because He sees in them spiritual truths.

He made a special study of a single grain of wheat. He took the hard, tiny seed and buried it in the earth and watched it die in giving birth to the mysterious germ from which the new plant springs. He watched the germ grow into the blade, and the blade expand into the ear, and the ear fill under the ripening sun. He stood by the ripened stalks and counted carefully the grains on each stalk, and often repeated the operation till He could tell of thirty, and sixty, and even a hundred grains on the same stalk. We can see Him at His experiments. The word is used advisedly and with reverence. He made special and repeated observations. It was not all done in a day, or a year. Christ dreamed over that corn of wheat, and for a purpose. What man, not being a farmer or a scientist, thinks of counting the grains of corn in the ear until he knows by heart the number? The farmer counts them because he wants to estimate the value of his crop; the man of science because he wishes to understand the facts of Nature. Christ counted them because He wanted to understand the facts. He did not know these facts by intuition. He did not learn them at the feet of the rabbis. He discovered them by observation and experiment, and then applied them in His own way. "Except a

grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit." The grain was glorified by death. That was what He discovered. And this is what He dreamed: He Himself was the grain of wheat. He too should be glorified by death "in bringing many sons unto glory." There would be the hundred-fold return from the death on the cross. Every man was that grain of corn. He must die to live. He must lose his life before he can be glorified. That is the "natural law in the spiritual world." In the death and life of that grain of wheat He saw the whole principle and theory of His own life and work: the resurrection and future glory of His Church. From His study of that grain of wheat He was able to make luminous to simple men the profoundest law of the spiritual life.

2. CHRIST AND THE SPARROW. Jesus was familiar with the habits and characteristics of the common animals found in the vicinity of Nazareth. Thus He mentions in His teaching the sheep, the goat, and the pig, the ox, the ass, and the camel, the dog, the fox, and the wolf, among quadrupeds. Of birds, He refers to the domestic fowl, to the eagle, the raven, the dove, and the sparrow. He names the serpent, the viper, the scorpion,

and the worm ; and calls to His service the gnat and the moth, the great sea-monster and the fishes of Galilee. But He never refers to these creatures simply as animals ; but because He sees in them men, or traits of human character. Readers of Shakespeare may have noticed that among the many scores of different animals he introduces into his works he always introduces them, with one or two rare exceptions like Petruchio's horse, to represent some person, or some moral quality of the mind. In this matter the great dramatist saw in the lower animals the same kind of features which Jesus saw, and followed Him. As illustrating this use which Jesus makes of the animals we have but to recall the fact that the Pharisees are vipers, Herod a fox, the disciples sheep among wolves, a rich man struggling to enter the kingdom cumbered with his riches, a camel attempting the passage of the needle's eye. The strayed sheep or the ox fallen into a pit is lost or fallen man and the object of Divine love, while the birds in the branches of the mustard-tree are the happy subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

How much Jesus saw in the simplest incident is well illustrated by His reflections on the dead sparrow. One wintry day, when the wind blew keen from Hermon's snowy

heights, a sparrow, fallen from the leafless hedge, lay dead in His pathway. As usual He stopped to think. And His thoughts were not those of other men. Arrested by such a sight the materialist would reflect on the rigour and cruelty of Nature. The unsophisticated traveller, touched with sentiment and sympathy for little, helpless creatures, would probably have exclaimed: "Poor thing, it has been frozen to death!" and would have passed on with a lingering sense of pain. But a peaceful light was on the face of Jesus. His thoughts were of God and the sparrow. It was fallen; but the Father had permitted the fall and had marked the spot where it lay. The fall was God's act, the wise, the right, the tender act of the Father who cares for the sparrows. It was no lesson of the cruel laws of Nature that Christ read in the curtained eye of the lifeless bird. Nature is cruel only to those who regard her as a machine. It was no emotion of pity that stirred Him at the sight; it was the calm peace of a perfect faith in God. In the death of that sparrow Christ saw the whole philosophy of Providence, and read the perfect story of the Divine love and care watching over every creature with wisdom and tenderness. That sparrow was the Father's child, the Christian, and all was well

with it since God had marked its fall, just as all would be well with every child of the heavenly Father when in the winter of life, it should be that child's lot to fall to the ground. That was the kind of lesson Christ learned from the objects of Nature. And we can see Him come back from His walk that wintry day with the light still on His face, gather round Him men and women who dread the future, tell them the story of God and the sparrow, and then with the animation of an unbounded faith cry, "Fear not; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

3. CHRIST AND THE LILY. It is summer-time now, and we see Him bending in meditative attitude over some object among the tall grass in the sunshine. What is He doing? He is considering a lily. He has often noted its grace and beauty. He knew it was a wild flower, uncared for by man, exposed in the open field and associated with thorns. How did it save its life? How did it preserve its beauty? How did it grow? As in every other case He would learn the facts; and here is what He discovered. The autumn winds shake from the fading flower a tiny seed which falls on the ground with no human hand to carry it to the barn, or even cover it with kindly earth. There it lies exposed to the breath

of the biting winds till dimpled into the soil by the wild roe's foot, or covered by decaying foliage. Who takes care of its spark of life while it sleeps in its earthy bed, or preserves it through the winter till the bosom of the earth becomes warm enough to give it nourishment? No husbandman has cared for it, and yet when the spring-time comes, it wakens into life and sends up a tender green shoot to prove that it has survived. And its risks only begin. There is no fence to shield it from the beasts of the field which roam where it grows. Caterpillar, palmerworm, locust may all prey on its defenceless leaves; yet it is preserved and grows. Who feeds it with moisture and clothes it with beauty, bringing all its parts to perfection, enabling it to lift its head to heaven and open its petals to kiss the sunbeams? It toils not for the food it eats, neither does it spin the robe it wears; yet it is apparelled in splendour and fares sumptuously every day! How could it be? Christ had but one answer. It was God who cared for the lily and decked it with beauty.

That lily was the Father's child: the Christian. God's people were often tempted to ask with great anxiety, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed?" But needlessly!

He who feeds the ravens and clothes the lily with beauty will surely provide for His children. Nor is this all. If God takes pains to deck such a worthless thing as a lily with beauty surpassing that of Solomon in all his glory, it is because He loves to see His lilies beautiful. He gives them, to begin with, a principle of pure, sweet life. By His sunshine and His rain He keeps them fragrant and lovely ; and all they do to merit such a blessing is to turn their faces sunward. That, too, is the law of the Christian life. "Have faith in God." Turn your face sunward and heavenward. Your Father will take care of the rest. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The dead sparrow enabled Christ to comfort believing men with the truth that all will be well with them at death, and after. Now, the living lily enables Him to show them how their Father will take care of them all through the present life. They have no cause for worry. If they but learn to read the lesson of Nature as Christ did, they will hear the graceful lily say :—

"For thy bread be not o'er thoughtful,
 God for all has taken thought ;
 When the babe is born the milk, too,
 To the mother's breast is brought.

He who gave the swan his silver,
And the hawk his plumes of pride,
And his purple to the peacock,
He will verily provide."

4. CHRIST AND THE WEATHER. Christ could read the face of the sky. Country people have a great interest in the weather, and the shrewder among them become fair judges of what is going to happen. But Christ was a dreamer. He knew indeed what the different clouds betokened, when a shower was coming up, when it was going to be fair weather and when a sudden tempest was likely to sweep over sea or land. But calm and storm, wind and rain, were not simply weather to Him. He always saw their counterpart in life. Sunshine and rain were the smile and blessing of God, tempest and calm the fierce or subtle forces which test the foundations of character. In the various forms and forces of air and sky He saw angels and spiritual things. He looked at them with a poet's eye. We can see the boy and the man laid on the sunny hillside gazing up into the azure depths and shaping heavenly mansions in the fleecy clouds set high in the blue. The clouds were dear to Jesus. They were His Father's mantle just hiding the Unseen from human eyes, but the motion of the clouds was the movement of

God. Or, when the mood was different, they were the chariots of heaven and sometimes brought Him visitors from the Spiritland as when they brought Him Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration to talk over His coming death at Jerusalem. But His Father was always in them, and spoke to Him out of them, so that He loved to live on the hills and pray on the hills in fellowship with the clouds.

Sometimes His mind would carry Him into the future, and He would see Himself coming back from heaven a second time, no longer in the humble guise of a human body as a little child, no longer to suffer for human sin, but as a king in His Father's chariot "Coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Only once was He for a moment amazed at the silence, when no voice from the cloud that shadowed His cross answered His cry; yet He believed His Father was in even that awful darkness, and surrendered His spirit to Him. Similarly He saw in every movement of the air some messenger from God. He listened to the sighing of the gentle wind and watched its influence on the leafy trees and standing corn, till He heard the music of unspeakable things and saw the process of

human regeneration under the power of that Spirit whose

“gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even.”

God is for us just where we can see Him. The limit lies in our own power of vision, not in the presence or absence of God. Jesus saw Him everywhere, and in the great school of Nature held constant fellowship with Him, thus in His own experience verifying the great benediction, “Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God”—everywhere.

VII

THE SYNAGOGUE

“He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day”—LUKE iv. 16.

BEFORE leaving the obscure period of our Lord's childhood and youth, we must look at His relation to the synagogue, and its influence in forming His mind and character. In Christ's day there were two centres of religious worship to which the orthodox Jews adhered. There was, first of all, the temple at Jerusalem with its great annual feasts to which all the adult male population “from Dan to Beersheba” were expected to come three times a year. In addition to the temple, however, there grew up after the Exile a system of synagogues, or local places of worship, which by the time of Christ had become important institutions in every town and village of the land. The actual building

was inexpensive, and conformed in general idea to the temple. It occupied the highest site in the town, and was so placed that when the worshipper entered, his face was towards Jerusalem. Opposite the door was the ark which contained the copy of the law, and round it were ranged "the chief seats in the synagogues." The men and the women occupied different sides of the building.

Three things were done in the synagogues every Sabbath day : the law was read on a systematic plan whereby the whole of it might be read in a given time ; the prayers were read or repeated after a liturgical fashion ; and some explanation of the law was offered to the hearers. Any one in the audience approved by the officer in charge might read the law and give the explanation. It is also probable that the synagogue partook somewhat of the nature of an elementary school, and had certain judicial functions ; for we read of men being brought before the synagogues, and of being even scourged in them, presumably for breaches of ecclesiastical law. To be a member of the synagogue was a mark of respectability, while to be put out of the synagogue was esteemed a disgrace. During the whole of His life Jesus kept in closest touch with the synagogues. In this school He learned some

things He could have learned nowhere else. In this connection we shall see Him acquiring His religious habits, taking liberties with the law undreamed of by the rabbis, and manifesting for the house of God, a zeal which is like a consuming fire.

I. THE HABITS OF JESUS. "As His custom was " He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. This phrase "as His custom was" is eloquent regarding a part of His early training on which much care had been bestowed. Habits have to be learned and, if good, are of slow growth; and no more pleasing thought connects itself with the youth of Jesus than the thought of His patiently acquiring good habits. Among these were two: regular attendance at the house of God on the Sabbath day, and similar attendance at the temple on the legal feast-days. This is really but two aspects of the same habit. Into the formation of good habits there enter inclination on the one hand and education on the other. Jesus had the advantage of both. His own inclination was towards the house of God; and Joseph and Mary, both by precept and example, encouraged Him in the matter.

Their home at Nazareth had all the advantages of a rural district, and the ideal of church-going is best seen in the country.

Who has not been moved to feelings of holy thought and peace and gladness by watching on some summer Sabbath morning the worshippers coming slowly up from the four winds of heaven to the little sanctuary among the trees? Leisurely they gather along the dusty road and on the footpaths through the fields by the edge of the standing corn, where, like Christ and His disciples on the same errand bent, they may pluck the ripening ears and eat them as they go. And the most pleasing sight of all is to see the family groups arrive, the parents greeting their neighbours with hard but kindly hand, while the children, thirsty with the walk, run round to the well at the manse to refresh themselves. And how helpful to worship is the simplicity inside. The fresh breeze, bringing in the scent of pine-trees through the open door, the low murmur of the brook that skirts the paddock, the ivy twig that peeps in through the open window, and the redbreast that looks calmly down on the scene from his perch on the open rafters—all are in keeping with the spirit of devotion and worship and instruction which pervades both pulpit and pew! What boy who has been taken by godly parents to such a place as regularly as the day comes round, what boy especially, whose higher life has been

awakened in such surroundings, can fail to love the house of God or cease in his manhood to labour and pray for her prosperity?

Christ was such a boy and enjoyed such privileges. From His earliest years Joseph and Mary took Him regularly to the synagogue, and He soon became an interested participator in its service. He acquired the habit of going; and that habit became part and parcel of His character, and brought Him to the familiar place in His manhood and even throughout the years of His public ministry. Equally regular was His attendance during the feasts at Jerusalem. From the time He was twelve His parents, we read, went up to Jerusalem year by year, and took the child with them. Mary and Jesus might have remained at home; for the law required the presence of the males only who were over twenty years of age. But in the spirit of true worshippers who enjoy a privilege and derive a benefit, rather than in the spirit of those who keep a law and perform a duty, the family all went together. And with time the habit became an intelligent and fixed religious principle, so strong that not even the premonition of His arrest and cruel death deterred Him from going up to Jerusalem to the feast. To-day the question of church-going is by some bearing the

Christian name, regarded as an open question to be decided by the whim of the individual, by others as a weariness hardly to be tolerated, by still others, as an irksome duty. Christ's own habit and principle in the matter ought to be both the law and the example of all who profess to follow His steps. The reason for His love of God's house we shall learn when the Hearer becomes the Teacher.

2. THE CARPENTER AND THE BIBLE. The reason why so many people who profess to be Christians seem to have no interest in, or love for, the Churches is twofold : First, their parents have not brought them regularly to worship in their childhood ; but on the pretext that the service is not suitable for children, have allowed them to stay away till the habit of staying away has become the principle of their life. Second, they lose both interest and love because they never try to serve the Churches. As a young man Christ became what may be called a lay reader in the synagogue at Nazareth. He prepared Himself for it, He looked forward to it, and in due time the Bible was put into His hand that He might read it to the congregation. Than this no better testimony can be borne to His character as a young tradesman. We are told that during these obscure years of His life "Jesus advanced in wisdom . . . and

in favour with God and men." Here is one evidence of it, that while still the carpenter, and a man who had never learned in the sense the rabbis had, He was welcomed as a reader of the Scriptures among the Galilean synagogues where He was best known.

Like Timothy, Jesus knew the Scriptures from childhood ; and from the earliest years of His boyhood loved and understood them. At the age of twelve He had already an intelligent grasp of the meaning of the Law and the Prophets, and esteemed it a luxury to visit Jerusalem, not that He might see the sights of the great city, but that He might have an opportunity of hearing the Bible expounded by the greatest living teachers. We may take it for certain that the one recorded instance of His sitting among the doctors was not the only one ; but that every time He went up He had fresh questions to ask, and a fuller understanding of the truth, and that the doctors themselves had for many years a deep and kindly interest in the gentle, intelligent lad from Galilee. It is a great mistake to assume that Jesus was independent of the instruction the scribes and lawyers and doctors could give. It is a greater mistake to assume that He despised their teaching. On the contrary, in the synagogues and in the temple He was ever

among them, learning all He could both of the letter and the spirit of the law. It was thus that He prepared Himself for service.

Christ was a beautiful reader of the Bible. The ordinary readers too often read the words only, like men reading the liturgy for the thousandth time with the same sing-song monotony and reverent inflection. He read the meaning behind the words, and expressed the spirit of the passage, till the law became gracious on His lips. The New Testament again and again bears witness to the charm of His voice and manner and gesture when He read or spoke. Those who knew Him were genuinely astonished at the perfection of His diction and accent, because to them He was only the carpenter. Culture they supposed to be a thing of the schools, yet here was a young man, who had never been to them, who possessed it in a remarkable degree. It was His love for the Book, and for what it contained, it was His understanding of its meaning and spirit, it was above all His overmastering desire to make the truth known to others, which made Him so welcome as a reader and exponent of the Scriptures in the Galilean synagogues.

Complaints are frequently heard that the Churches afford so few opportunities for laymen, and especially for working men taking

part in their public services. Ministers, it is thought, are jealous of them, and congregations will not tolerate them, because they have not been to college! And to meet the complaint services have been started to be conducted by laymen. But the difficulty does not really lie with the ministers and the Churches. It is not a question of college. It is simply a question of culture. A good man who cannot read the Bible correctly, who has never put himself to the trouble to master its words or comprehend its sense, who has never taught himself the difficult art of opening his mouth and speaking so that the deaf can hear and the hearing not be deafened, may be of great service to the Church, but his place is neither at the reading-desk nor in the pulpit. On the other hand, the good man who has prepared himself for this service in the Spirit of Christ is always in request. It is a question of mere ability to do it rightly, a question of culture, and has nothing to do with colleges. There are ordinary working men whose ministry is always valued, because, like the Master they serve, they love the Bible, and have learned to read and explain it in such a way as to make other men love it too. It is a service many might render if they would but prepare themselves for it.

3. ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD. Jesus loved the house of God, even those imperfect Jewish forms of it we are so apt to despise. While He was unsparing in His denunciation of some of the men officially connected with the temple and the synagogues, the institutions themselves had His warmest love and support; and that though they were far from coming up to His ideal. It was enough for Him that they were consecrated to Divine service. Whatever attitude Paul and subsequent leaders took up of necessity towards them, Christ Himself remained loyal to the temple and the synagogue, till He was dragged from their service to Calvary.

A cool and critical attitude toward the house of God is not Christian. It is sometimes asked: "What would Jesus do if He were here to-day? Would He be found among the church-goers or among the non-church-goers? And by some strange oversight of the data on which alone a true answer can be based, it is believed by some that He would be found outside, rather than inside, the churches. But this opinion can be held only by those for whom the idea of a house of God has no attraction, for whom prayer and worship have no true meaning. When Christ did live on earth He was found

inside the churches, a helper and a zealous supporter of them, not because the right ideas were always taught in them, not because they were doing all for the poor and the oppressed that they ought to have been doing, but because they were houses of prayer and worship and teaching approved by God.

And Christ had proof that these institutions were of God. It is true that He found moneymakers turning even religion into a means of gain and trafficking even in the temple. It is true that He heard, and disapproved of the long and constantly repeated prayers used in the services, and the perfunctory reading and exposition of the Scriptures. It is true that He saw the hypocrisy and inconsistent lives of scribes and Pharisees. But for all that, He loved the house of God ; for there in His childhood and youth He had learned much and had been encouraged, and there He had seen marvels. In the synagogues He had seen the sinner, convicted of sin, smite on his breast in penitence and return to his house justified. There He had seen the sick healed, devils cast out, and withered hands equipped for service. Instead of standing outside blaming the Churches for neglect of duty, we see Him standing up inside, Bible in hand, labouring

to reform abuses and uplift the life of the worshippers to God. It was written of Him, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat Me up"—a Scripture literally fulfilled when we remember that He was arrested and crucified when attending the Passover at Jerusalem, though all His friends warned Him to stay away.

Zeal for the house of God, both in its literal and spiritual aspects consumed our Lord Jesus Christ. Zeal for the house of God is a lost emotion, an almost extinct fire, in the bosoms of many of Christ's disciples. *Ennui* has taken its place, because men fail to see that God and His cause are worth living and dying for. Meanwhile, those who have truly "learned Christ" see His will in His own actions; they strive to acquire His habits and enter, "as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day," and offer themselves for whatever service they can render, esteeming it an honour, with the psalmist, to be even a door-keeper in the house of God.

VIII

JOHN THE BAPTIST

“Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.”—
MATT. xi. 11.

WE now come to the great break in Christ's life. Nothing in His history is more remarkable than the sharp contrast between His private life and His public ministry. During almost nine-tenths of His days He lived and laboured within the narrow limits of a common man's lot. During the remaining tenth He was so constantly before the public that rarely could He take a meal or even pray to His Father, but the multitude thronged Him. From being village carpenter He passed directly into the character of the most popular preacher that ever stirred the Holy Land, the loved of the people, the hated of ecclesiastics, and the perplexity of kings.

The break happened at Christmas-time. He had been at the bench all day as usual giving the finishing touches to the last bit of work He had taken in hand, and when it was ready He carried it to the owner and returned to the shop. Here He cleaned up His tools and arranged them in their places with unusual care. It was the last time He would use them ; for having put His hand to the plough He would never look back. Never again would He work in the familiar shop where He had spent so many hard and happy days. There was an undertone of sadness about the operation as He leisurely rubbed the saw and the chisels with oil to keep the rust off ; for there is a friendship of tools and a love for them which the true workman is loth to break, even when laying them aside for higher service. So did Christ feel that last night by the bench ; but He finished His task, and then went home to His mother's house. It was a pleasant home-coming. That night there was to be a quiet family party in the cottage at Nazareth in honour of the eldest son's thirtieth birthday, and everything looked its brightest. Mary was particularly happy on the occasion ; for she had all her children round her, and the youngest was no longer a child, so that she felt the worst of her trials were past.

Poor Mary! little did she think that the worst was yet to come. Her ignorance was bliss. That night she was happy. Jesus, too, was happy in the happiness of the rest and in the consciousness of having well completed one part of life, and of readiness to start on a farther stage. It was altogether an ideal gathering. We shall look on it with tender human sympathy; the deepest things of life are in it; for it is the last time we shall ever see that whole family meet again in such joy and peace on earth.

Next morning Jesus told His mother He was going away from home for at least six weeks, but not to be at all anxious about Him, as she should hear from Him in due time. Bidding them all farewell, He turned His back on Nazareth, and set His face towards the east and the new life which awaited Him. The road He took lay along the fertile valley of Jezreel and down by the banks of the crystal stream from which Gideon's braves had lapped the water on the eve of their great victory. The immediate point for which He was making was a peaceful reach in the Jordan valley where the river, expanding into an ample pool, washed the pebbly beach of the Judean wilderness. There Christ had to keep an appointment with His heavenly Father which He had

entered into in the privacy of His own mind ; and now that the fulness of the time has come He steps manfully out to fulfil it.

The journey was not in itself great ; yet with the possible exception of His last journey to Jerusalem this was the most momentous journey He ever took ; for He was passing through the portals of the *Via dolorosa*, that palm-strewn, music-haunted, tear-bedewed, and blood-stained pathway which led Him up to the clouded brow of Golgotha. He was taking His first decisive step towards the Cross. He knew where He was going and why ; and as the sun tipped the hills with gold we see Him stepping towards the river like a man with his mind made up. We note that He is going down towards the river ; for Christ descends into the valley before He rises to the heights. His public ministry which ended in blood on Calvary's cross-crowned mountain-top, began as solemnly in water in Jordan's hollow river. Thus He came, as it is written of Him, "by water and blood." He is on His way to meet His forerunner, John the Baptist. We must therefore glance at the character and work of John.

I. A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS. He was the senior of Christ by six months. The two were second cousins on

the maternal side. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest of sterling character and blameless life; and his mother, Elisabeth, also a woman of deep piety, could trace her descent from the house of Aaron. John was the son of their old age, and, like Isaac and Samuel, was the child of promise and many prayers. From the time he was circumcised when eight days old we never once see him till he suddenly appears as a preacher in the wilderness of Judea thirty years after. Before he was thirty-three he received the martyr's crown at the hands of Herod, after fulfilling a unique ministry.

In temperament and appearance John was wholly different from Jesus. He stands before us, the Elijah of the New Testament, clad in a tunic of camel's hair which is secured at the waist with a leather belt; and, like a true son of the wilderness, he is content to live on locusts and wild honey. All his life he was a total abstainer from wine and strong drink; and he had no taste for the pleasures of society. In manhood and moral courage he was a preacher of righteousness who, like Martin Luther or John Knox, never feared the face of man; in personal piety he was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb"; and in achievement "the hand of the Lord was with him,"

enabling him to turn multitudes of "the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just." John's estimate of himself was of the most modest order. He was only "a voice crying in the wilderness." Christ's estimate of John, on the contrary, was of the highest order : "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

The greatness of John has never received due recognition. He has suffered in this respect from nearness to Christ. The herald is dwarfed in the shadow of the King. Nevertheless among all the men of the prophetic order, including Moses and Samuel, Elijah and Isaiah, John the Baptist stands easily first. He never courted popularity, but was content to let men come to him. That they went in hundreds, that all classes went and submitted to his baptism "confessing their sins," is a testimony to his greatness such as we have in the case of no other Hebrew prophet. John never became a follower of Jesus ; but he rendered Him the highest service. He prepared the way for Him, he introduced Him to the people, he baptized Him, and pointed Him out to men as "the Lamb of God."

2. WHAT THE VOICE SAID. During the first part of his ministry John was content to

announce the nearness of the kingdom of heaven and to call on all men to repent in view of it. Those who professed a genuine interest in the matter he baptized while insisting on fruits meet for repentance as a condition. In this work he was engaged when Jesus sought an interview with him. It was the second day after His departure from Nazareth when our Lord began to approach the vicinity of John's labours. As if by some supernatural impulse, the Baptist paused in his ablutions and, standing on the bank of the river looking northwards as if he expected some one, saw Jesus actually drawing nigh. For a minute he looked with a gaze of kindling enthusiasm on the approaching figure, and then with a dramatic sweep of his arm, he turned to the people and cried : "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world !"

That was what the voice said. It was the greatest word that had yet reached human ears. It called on men to look at Christ from a special view-point. There are many different view-points ; and the question as to the view-point from which Christ is regarded is of prime importance. There is the angle from which the men of Nazareth saw Him. They looked on Him as a carpenter. Their idea was correct, but imperfect. There is

the view-point of Pilate : "Behold the man." Many have never seen Christ from any other angle. To them He is just "the model Man" or "The Great Exemplar." Again their idea is correct, but imperfect. There is the view-point of Nicodemus. To-day this is perhaps the most popular position of all. Christ is "the Man sent from God," or "the Great Teacher." So many occupy this position that we meet everywhere with the assertion that the "Sermon on the Mount" contains the soul of Christianity. That Christ is the greatest of all teachers is in accordance with fact. The view is correct, but imperfect. That the soul or peculiarity of the Christian religion lies in the Sermon on the Mount we do not believe. There is left the view-point of John : "Behold the Lamb of God." We now look on the canvas. The perfect Man has no place on it. The Great Teacher, with His face "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" and disciples grouped at His feet, disappears. The figure of a Lamb fills the view. Here manhood is an incongruous idea. Teaching is out of the question. An entirely new set of ideas regarding Christ claims our attention. He is "the Lamb of God."

John's audience knew exactly what the

Lamb of God was. It was the lamb God claimed as a sacrifice for sin. It must have these two characteristics : First, it must be spotless. It might be wholly black or wholly white. It could not be speckled. It must be spotless. Second, it must be without blemish. No imperfection, or deformity, or disease could belong to it. It must be without spot and blameless. Having these features, it was the lamb accepted by God as an atonement for the spotted and the blameworthy.

It was the sinlessness of Christ that John pointed out, and His consequent fitness to be the offering made once for all for human sin. Until we see Christ from that viewpoint, as well as from the others, we do not see Him. An exemplar is powerless to raise the sinner. A moral philosopher, however great, is impotent in the presence of fallen man. He needs first a Sin-bearer. He has that in the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He is redeemed "with precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." That is the soul, the peculiarity of the Christian religion. That was what John pointed out as Christ drew nigh. To the prophetic eye the sacrificial Lamb is already seen approaching the altar without blemish or

spot ; yet coming to the washing like " the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

3. A BECOMING FULFILMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jesus had undertaken the journey to the Jordan for a set purpose ; and as soon as He arrived He declared that purpose by requesting John to baptize Him. Knowing the character of the new candidate, John objected : " I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me ? " The objection, however, was at once overruled by Jesus, who replied : " Suffer it now ; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The full import of these words we may never know. They imply at least that the act of John in baptizing Jesus formed a fitting conclusion to his mission as herald of the coming kingdom. They imply farther that the act of Jesus in having Himself baptized by John was a fitting preparation for His new reign as King. The subjects having entered the kingdom through the cleansing medium of water, as a sign of its holy character, it only remained, in order to make its inauguration complete, that the King should be also baptized. This He now attends to as a becoming fulfilment of " all righteousness."

The baptism of Jesus was in many ways a unique event. We may notice the following

facts regarding it :—1. *It identified Him with the rest of the people in the matter of sin.* He came among the rest of the people as one of them. John wished to make an exception of Him, but Jesus would suffer no exception to be made in His case. It is true He had no sins of His own to wash away ; but He had assumed “the sin of the world.” He came to baptism for the whole world as its Sin-bearer so that in Him, in symbol, the sin of the world should be washed away. On entering the new kingdom of heaven Christ determined to enter it by no gateway or avenue which was not equally open to every man. Thus He assumed our flesh, just as He assumed our sins, became subject to our sorrows and to our death that in every experience He might be one with us. And so He brought our sins to the washing just as afterwards He bore them to the cross and buried them in His grave. 2. *It was the first act of His public ministry.* Before He began to preach and teach and perform His wonderful works He had Himself baptized. His baptism marks the break between His private life and His public ministry. Before entering on that, He by symbol and in fact buried beneath the waves of Jordan His former life as common man and carpenter, and rose to His new life as the revealer of

the Divine love and the bearer of human sin.
3. *It was an action pleasing to His Father.* Immediately after the baptism "a voice out of the heavens" said: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It was only then, perhaps, that Jesus became fully conscious of His own Divinity, as the descent of the dove became to John the confirmation of the same truth.

In helping Jesus to realise these ideals John the Baptist rendered Him great service, and must ever rank among the influences which aided in moulding His life. The question as to the nature of that influence is important. Did Jesus derive His ideas of the kingdom of heaven and His methods of work from John, or did John derive his from Jesus? Was John the Baptist the forerunner of Jesus mentally as well as historically and officially? Three answers are possible. First, that neither influenced the other, but both received their revelations by direct inspiration. Second, that John but gave utterance to the ideas of Jesus. Third, that Jesus took up the ideas and methods of John and carried them to perfection. The last answer is the most probable. The probabilities are all in favour of John and Jesus having frequently met at the feasts in Jerusalem during the third decade of their

life, and apart from all question of their relationship, nothing would be more natural than that they should discover each other and discuss the affairs of the kingdom. John's remark : " And I knew Him not " has no bearing on this point ; but refers to John's ignorance of the identity of Jesus, his friend, with the Son of God until what took place at the baptism. It detracts nothing from the originality of Jesus to say that He learned some things from John the Baptist, any more than it detracts from His Divine nature to say that Mary taught Him to read or Joseph to master carpentry. He was born an infant and grew to manhood by ordinary methods. He acquired His knowledge of Scripture by using the common manuscripts. He built on the foundation of the psalmists and prophets. God's method of revelation led up to Jesus. John, the greatest of all His predecessors, brought the revelation farther up than any of them. Jesus began where John finished, and made the revelation of God complete.

The influence of John the Baptist on Jesus is as distinctly traceable as the influence of Mary, or of Nature. By submitting to his baptism Jesus in a sense became a disciple of John. During the first year of His ministry He apparently assisted John in his work. He

adopted as the key-tone of His own preaching, John's watchword: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He gave the same word to His disciples. He also adopted John's method of baptizing His converts, but soon gave both to His preaching and to His baptism a deeper note than John had ever sounded. Thus He who bore witness to the unsurpassed greatness of John proves Himself greater, and the Heavenly Scholar leaves His schoolmaster far behind!

IX

TEMPTATION AND THE TEMPTER

“He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan.”—MARK i. 13.

TEMPTATION is just the garden of Eden or the wilderness of Judea, according as it is “mere man” or Christ that is tempted. In either case the subtle serpent and the wild beasts are there; and the tempted ones become their prey or their masters, according to character. The environment is the same. Temptation is the school in which the human will is tested in relation to things good and evil, where the will is educated, where it is weakened or strengthened, where men learn self-control over their appetites, attainments, ambitions, or else fall before them. It is the natural and the artificial conditions of moral life.

The temptation of Christ was a necessity

and real. It behoved Him to be "tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin," if He was ever to prove Himself the Saviour "able to succour them that are tempted." Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record such a temptation, with the variations of detail common to different writers. Many difficulties have been raised over these records. They have been regarded as myths, or as legendary additions to the Gospels. For example, there is the statement about the "exceeding high mountain" to which Christ was taken to see "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." The fact that there is no such mountain in Palestine, and the farther fact that there is no mountain on earth from which all the kingdoms of the world could be seen, has led to the rejection of the whole account as mythical. In the same way the incidents of the pinnacle of the temple, and especially of the personal appearance of Satan on the scene, have been discredited. And rightly so, if we are intended to read these records in their literal and physical sense. But we are not intended so to read them. The synoptists wrote about spiritual things in graphic and pictorial language, as all other writers do. The language does not interfere with the accuracy of the history. The "Pilgrim's Progress"

is history as literally correct and scientifically true as any to be found in the pages of Tacitus or Hume. It simply deals with a different set of ideas and uses the language best fitted to describe them. So with the Bible. It describes moral facts and experiences in material pictures, so that the average mind may grasp the main truths embodied therein. Thus the account of the fall in Genesis gives a tragically true history of early man's experiences in the school of temptation, and of the consequences of yielding to that temptation ; but we shall strangely err if we imagine that a literal serpent spoke to Eve, that her sin lay in eating from some forbidden fruit-tree, or that her banishment was from a garden with material gates and geographical limits. The account of Christ's temptation is parallel with the account of Eve's temptation, and both must be read sympathetically, with one eye on the intention of the writers and the other on the facts of life. To attempt to apply the principles of topography to such records is like hunting for a speaking serpent in Mesopotamia, or looking for the Delectable Mountains in Bedfordshire. We shall meet with more success if we look at the spiritual experiences through which Christ passed in the wilderness and the results of them. Three matters fall to be considered

—the tempter, the temptations, and the Victor.

I. THE TEMPTER. The records affirm that Christ was tempted of Satan. Under any moral system the idea of Satan is a necessity of thought. There cannot be a "here" without a "there," a God without a devil, or a temptation without a tempter. Every people under the sun has recognised this necessity, and have named some spirit of evil in their philosophy. Different races have seen this evil spirit from their own angle, but all have seen him. The necessity arises not only logically, but practically. There are wicked works in the world to be accounted for, and men have as naturally and necessarily attributed them to Satan as they have attributed good things to God. Whether they have been right in doing so is a question outside the limits of our present subject, and may be left to those who have time and taste for such speculations. Our business is with the schools and schoolmasters of Christ ; and among these the Satan of the Bible takes his place. He is a very shadowy being in earlier Bible times, but grows in distinctness as time advances till he is revealed in all his power and wickedness in the New Testament.

The evolution of the idea of Satan in the Bible is an interesting example of the way in

which ideas become clearer to the mind of man as time passes, or otherwise of the progressive method by which God unfolds His revelations to man. We cannot here discuss the chronology of the Old Testament, nor the order in which the various sections of the different books come in regard to the ideas they reveal ; but assuming that Genesis comes before the Prophets, and that the intervening books fall in between, we shall find that Satan, as the powerful spiritual adversary of God and man, had no place in early Hebrew thought. The full revelation of our adversary, like that of our Father, was reserved for Christ.

The earliest idea as to the origin of evil probably was that it sprang directly from the heart of bad men. Just before the flood, the wickedness which led to the overthrow of society is referred to that source. But men soon saw that such an explanation was unphilosophical. There must have been some agent of evil suggestion outside of man to begin with, and this agent they found in a degenerate reptile—the serpent of Eden. The serpent, however, disappears in this connection immediately after his success with Eve, and is never once heard of again throughout the Old Testament. During the days of the patriarchs little attempt is made

to account for evil ; but from the time of the Exodus evil begins to be referred to the he-goats of heathen worship or, alternately, to idols. The higher minds among the Jews, however, began to see that evil could not emanate from mere beasts or dumb idols ; and we find the idea of the source of evil passing through a transition stage during the period of the monarchy. Saul's wickedness, for example, was attributed to an evil spirit from the Lord, and the witches and necromancers of this period were believed to be possessed by familiar spirits. The word "satan" is common enough in the Old Testament, with the simple meaning of adversary, but not till the time of David and the Book of Job is the word used for the name of an evil being, and then the word is used to describe the agent who brought about Job's calamities and stirred up David to number the people. But in both cases he is still an evil spirit from the Lord.

When we reach the prophets the connection between God and the spirit of evil is broken. Referring to the destruction of Babylon, Isaiah, for instance, harks back on the he-goats, or satyrs : " Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures . . . and satyrs shall dance there " ; also, when referring to the desolation of Zion, he uses similar lan-

guage: "The satyr shall cry to his fellow, yea, the night monster shall settle there." The word "satyr" used by Isaiah is the same as that used in Leviticus and Kings to describe the he-goats of heathen worship, but the meaning has undergone a great change. The satyr of Isaiah is neither a he-goat in his proper character nor yet an object of religious worship, but a dancing, howling associate of doleful creatures and night monsters, revelling in the desolation of once populous cities. We have here the idea of evil being wrought by some fierce, malicious creature which loves the darkness; and we can see in Isaiah's satyr the prototype of the devil as he appeared to mediæval minds furnished with hair and horn and cloven hoof. The prophet Zechariah sees Satan as a powerful evil spirit accusing Joshua, the high priest, in the presence of God; and this passage is farther interesting as suggesting for the first time Satan's connection with fire as an element in which to punish his victims, where Joshua, delivered from the power of the accuser, is described as "a brand plucked out of the fire." This is the fullest idea we get of Satan from the Old Testament.

When we come to the New Testament we are at once introduced to Satan as a

supernatural agent of evil, capable of assuming whatever form he may choose, personal, powerful, ambitious ; prince of the powers of darkness, and ruler of the principalities of this world ; the author of all falsehood and wickedness, and the opponent of all good. He stands out before us a fallen intelligence of great rank, having a mind well furnished with plausible arguments and stocked with Scripture quotations wherewith to clench them, plying his nefarious trade among the hills of the Holy Land with conceit enough to sustain him in his attempts to seduce the very Son of God.

Such a devil has been a real Biblical difficulty to many, and they have tried to dispose of him as the sailors disposed of Jonah, but without satisfactory results. He has always come up on deck again, and the storm rages as before. Christ believed in the existence, the power and the malicious intent of this evil spirit, and showed to man the only way he can be successfully met, by employing the methods of resistance. Before them Satan voluntarily flees.

2. THE TEMPTATIONS. The temptation of Jesus was arranged by the Holy Spirit much in the same way as the temptation of Job. It took place immediately after His baptism and the voice of His Father's

approval. It took place in the wilderness, and lasted forty days. The time and the place are both instructive. Temptation is most likely to assail us at the height of some religious experience. The strongest temptations assail us when we are alone with our own thoughts. It was so in Christ's case. At the height of His religious assurance He retired into the wilderness in order to think out calmly the principles of His ministry and His methods of work. It was then that Satan assailed Him. There were three temptations :—

First, he takes advantage of the physical hunger of Christ. After His long fast the Saviour was conscious of the cravings of nature. He was also conscious of Divine power. At that moment the thought came into His mind how easy it would be for Him to turn the stones at His feet into so many loaves. He had been assured of His Divinity by the voice from heaven. He had not yet proved it. Satan suggested the proof now in the case of necessity : "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." By this physical avenue the wily serpent succeeded with Eve, and then reached Adam through the social side of his being. But Satan failed here with Christ. And for three reasons : First,

Christ would not submit His will to Satan, nor obey a suggestion from the spirit of evil. Second, He would not use His supernatural power to satisfy any natural appetite of His own, however clamant. And third, and chiefly, He would resort to no means of making His daily bread which was not equally open to every man. This is the principle all through the life of Christ. He never does anything for Himself that other men cannot do ; He never places Himself in any position where other men cannot follow. And He repels the temptation by ignoring Satan's reference to His Divinity, and classing Himself with common men, replies : "Man shall not live by bread alone ; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Second, baffled in his attempt to reach Christ through the physical side of His nature, the devil next tried Him on the religious side. We see Christ now standing on the highest pinnacle of the temple of religion. He has won His way to that unapproachable position. He is conscious that He occupies it. Is He not the very Son of God ? He realises in that moment that He is not only greater than the prophets, but holier. He is the Sinless One. The question that now presents itself to His mind is the question of His own moral and re-

ligious infallibility. The fiend is again at His ear telling Him that He can never fall if He be the Son of God, because the angels will hold Him up, as it is written in the psalm. He ought really to prove His infallibility by trying to cast Himself down. But Christ stands on His exalted pinnacle unmoved. He is standing there still, on the very topmost minaret of the temple of religion, the highest and holiest of all who have ever made the pious life their care! But He has never proved the promise of the ninety-first psalm the devil's way. His answer to this temptation must have made even Satan wince, for it showed him that Christ was looking straight through his wiles, and reminded him that he was in the presence of God: "Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Third, Satan is not easily discouraged, so he tries again, plays his strongest card, and risks all. He tries to reach Christ through His ambition. In dealing with other men Satan had found them prepared to sacrifice physical comfort, and even religion, to gain fame and power and glory. Christ, he thought, might yield there, and so the scene is changed. The temple, with its priestly fragrance and holy associations, gradually fades from the mind of Christ, and He finds

Himself on the top of an exceeding high mountain. The wilderness beneath Him is transformed into mighty kingdoms, with walled towns, battlemented forts, and gorgeous palaces. Armies train in their pleasure-grounds, and navies plough the seas, and everywhere regal splendour greets the eye. That is the mountain of a young man's ambition. Every young man with any character and soul in him has stood on that mountain, and has seen, lying at his feet, the kingdoms he might conquer. Christ was no exception. Rather His was the perfect vision of the greatest man. He saw all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. They were His by right. Prophecy declared them His, and conquest would yet fulfil prophecy. Already He saw princes throng His courts, and kings cast their crowns at His feet, while the wealth and honour of the nations were being brought unto Him.

At that supreme moment Christ was conscious of the power to conquer the whole world. He had all the qualities of heart and body and brain to insure success. The question now was the question of method. And here came the temptation. Satan suggested an easy conquest at an apparently low price : "Worship me, and these kingdoms

are yours." He suggested the method of the Pharaohs, the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Napoleons ; he suggested that Christ should carve His way to glory by the sword. He was strongly tempted. He saw His crippled country languishing under the yoke of Rome. He thought of the conquests of David and the glory of Solomon's kingdom. Then He saw invading armies and a captive people groaning under the oppressor's rod till the Maccabean brothers rose above the political horizon, like stars of hope, and strike for freedom and for God. Might He not do the same, and with more success? Already Rome had reached her zenith and was beginning to fall. The time was opportune. Should He not emerge from the wilderness sword in hand, strike off the Roman bond, restore the kingdom to Israel, and then with a triumphal march more brilliant than that of Alexander, sweep beyond the Jewish borders and conquer the world? He knew He could do it the devil's way, but resisted and triumphed.

3. THE VICTOR. In that supreme moment Christ realised that His kingdom should not be of this world, and turning on the tempter, He proved Himself King by the imperious command, which the devil obeyed, "Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Several times again in His subsequent history Satan returned to the attack, but found our Lord invulnerable, even in the garden and on the cross. In the depths of physical weakness, on the heights of religious ecstasy, at the summit of intellectual ambition, He had in turn been tested, and had come off victor. Among the stones of the wilderness, from the towers of the temple, from the mountain-top, He had seen a vision which Satan never saw. He saw a method of conquering the world which hitherto had not been tried. The victory was still far off, and the road that led to it was drenched with brackish tears and blood ; but it was sure. The decisive battle-fields were the Gethsemanes and the Calvaries of good men, the arenas where wild beasts should rend His followers to please a crowd, the Smithfields where martyr fires should smite the gross darkness of the people with light from heaven, the spots where prayer should be made and the sacred shrines round which men should gather in every land to worship God. On these He would conquer. Not by force, but by love ; not by shedding the blood of His foes, but by pouring out His own ; not by the sword, but by the Cross would He win the world. And He emerged

from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit to carry on the campaign.

How He inspires us, this gentle, majestic, unconquerable Christ ! When we are driven by the Spirit into our wilderness, there to decide on our campaign of life, when we stand on the mountain-top of our ambition, and view the kingdoms we may conquer and the glory of them, may our eye be on Him, and our choice be like His ! The tempter will be there, but powerless if we resist him. Steadfast in the faith may we bid him begone, and then follow the Christ out of the wilderness into the haunts of men, there to win, by sacrifice and love, the kingdom prepared for us "from the foundation of the world."

X

HIS COMPANIONS

“The twelve and certain women.”—LUKE viii. 2.

THE result of Christ's successful encounter with Satan was that He returned to Galilee conscious of a new power and greatly strengthened for His new mission. The change was noted by those who had previously known Him, and perplexed them, but they listened to His teaching with increasing delight. He commenced His ministry without patronage and without assistance. He stood alone. He had no equals who could appreciate His aims ; but found Himself at one time moving among mountain solitudes of thought where human mind had never strayed before, and at another time descending into the deepest shades of sorrow without a friend to share His grief. This loneliness of Jesus in all the greater matters relating to

His mission, was a pathetic feature of His earthly life.

But He could not continue alone. The discipline of society is essential to perfection. It is only as men mix with other men and come to know their conditions of life, their sorrows and their sins, that roundness of character and fulness of sympathy are attained. Christ was by no means independent of this discipline. He could not reach the full stature of His manhood, nor realise His aims in the world, without the help of other men. Moreover, the social instinct was strongly developed in His nature. Like Wisdom, He rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, and His delight was with the sons of men. He accordingly began, soon after His return from the wilderness, to surround Himself with groups of friends who attained great influence with Him, and did much to determine, at least, the outward features of His ministry. We must therefore consider now who those friends were and how they affected His life.

I. THE TWELVE. First in importance comes the group of His twelve disciples. To His intercourse with them we owe many of the gracious words which fell from His lips, and in their fellowship we see Him in His happiest hours. They belonged to the same

social grade as Himself, and were probably all Galileans. He found them about the villages which stud the shores of the sea of Galilee, in whose waters most of them gained a livelihood by fishing, though it is more than likely that some of them also tilled the adjacent fields. One of them was drawn from the Roman tax office. They were one and all unsophisticated and respectable men of more than average ability, and well fitted to render the service for which they were chosen.

Their training for their work deserves special notice. It is often assumed that the twelve apostles were illiterate fishermen. It is a calumny. It is perfectly true that they had never learned ; but only in the sense in which the same fact was true of their Master. That is to say, they had never sat, like Paul, at the feet of Gamaliel, nor studied, like Apollos, in one of the great schools, nor acquired, like Luke the beloved physician, the culture of letters which adorns his style ; and hence they are described in the language of the people, as "unlearned and ignorant men." But their ordinary education at home, and in connection with the synagogue, had been well looked after, so that they were capable of doing efficient work both as pioneers of the gospel and organisers of the Church. They were all preachers, some of

them in the front rank ; and several of them wrote books which have survived the ravages of time. One of the fishermen had a Gospel and an Apocalypse in his brain, besides sundry charming letters, all of which are still read with interest and with profit.

But it is when we think of their special training as disciples of Christ that we see at once they must take rank among the best educated of all theological students. The question is sometimes asked : What is the use of sending young men to college to study for the ministry, when the apostles who founded the Church were just unlearned fishermen? The question suggests that a specially trained ministry is a departure from Christ's ideal. It does more. It reveals an imperfect appreciation of facts and a particularly unintelligent reading of the New Testament. The average theological student spends three or four years in the Hall, or College, of his Church. He may have previously attended a university for the purpose of acquiring a general culture such as he would find helpful in any walk of life ; and in that respect alone he may have an advantage over the apostles. But when it comes to his special studies as a minister of the gospel, the advantage is all in favour of the twelve.

For three-and-a-half years—not winter sessions—these men studied Christian theology at the Fountain-head, drinking in from the lips of the Greatest Teacher who ever taught the words of truth and life. Moreover, in all their pastoral labours and itinerant preaching they had the advantage of His methods and of His personal superintendence. But more than all this, they could see Him at work, they could hear Him in prayer, they could look into His eyes so eloquent with love, they could listen to the very heart-beat of His bosom and bring their own souls into touch with the magnetic force of His soul, and draw therefrom a spiritual vitality and verve which neither difficulty, nor danger, nor death itself could quell.

The thoroughness of their training is emphasised by the fact that, on becoming followers of Christ, the twelve had to forsake their worldly avocations. This is an essential feature in their case. He Himself had laid aside His tools; and He asks the twelve to follow His example in this matter. He had three reasons for asking them to take this step. First, He was calling them to a life of faith, and He wished them to realise that in giving up all for God they should lose nothing that was necessary to their life. Second, He wanted to impress them with the

fact that religion is the supreme business of life. The man who spends his life in fishing and nothing else does not live. The man who never does anything else but make his daily bread in the tax office does no work. Every man's life-work ought to be over and above his means of livelihood. He gets that by the way. His Father will see to that, if the man but serve in all his life the interests of religion. Third, He knew that the spiritual work to which He was calling them would require the whole of their time and the whole working force of both body and brain. The successful propagation of Christianity is not the leisure-hour recreation that some have deemed it. There is no work more exhausting, no work which calls for better preparation, no work which demands that the whole man—physical, mental, and moral—shall be in better form than spiritual work.

The temperaments of the twelve men whom Christ gathered round Him were more varied than the occupations He called on them to leave. They had not only to be disciples, but witnesses of His life and death and resurrection to an unbelieving and critical world; and hence they were chosen with all kinds of temperaments so that their testimony might be sure. James and John, for example,

were men of such strong feeling and passion that when roused to anger they had earned for themselves the nickname of "Sons of Thunder." Whether that reflects on the temper of Zebedee, their father, or not, we need not inquire. The sons themselves had enough temper to merit the description, since they would have destroyed a whole village for simply refusing to entertain their Master. They were also men of great ambition, probably inherited from their mother, Salome, since we find her canvassing, in the interests of her sons, for the highest appointments in the coming kingdom. Peter was a strong man with a weakness, in the main firm as a rock, warm-hearted and impulsive, but mercurial in his feelings, and too self-confident and headstrong for a perfect character. He was probably the most eloquent man of the twelve. Of a totally different type was Nathanael, pure-hearted, pious, and guileless : the very embodiment of the devotional life. Thomas was a cautious man inclined to scepticism—the kind of man who always asks for proofs and naturally looks at the dark side of things, the phlegmatic man with whom feeling counts little and reason much, who prefers his solitary broodings to the pleasures of society, but whose loyalty and enthusiasm are doubly assured once his

intellect is satisfied. Levi, taken from the tax office, could handle the pen, and had a mind to which analogy strongly appealed, and saw in the various events of Christ's life confirmations of ancient prophecy ; a man of courage and some social influence, who, on leaving the office to become a Christian, entertained the members of his own calling to supper in order to introduce them to Jesus. Judas Iscariot, again, had the quality of thrift largely developed—the financier's talent which sees at a glance the money value of everything, including even women's sentiment and men's souls ; a great gift when rightly used, but which, abused, leads to covetousness and the selling of Christ. And so with the others of the twelve, though less known to us. No two men are alike. There, for instance, was Simon Zelotes, a member of a Jewish sect of peculiar people whose principles led them to be regarded as fanatics. But Christ chose him. The man who can belong to a peculiar people is always a man who thinks for himself ; and a man who is zealous for his religious principles is worth a thousand men who are zealous about nothing. An active mind and a zealous heart are of more value in the kingdom of God than a cold, orthodox faith. Such were the twelve men who for more than three years were the constant companions of

Christ, who imbibed His teaching and secured His love, and who in after-days gave His religion to the world.

2. THE GALILEAN WOMEN.—A brief word must be said regarding the group of devoted women who during the latter part of our Lord's ministry are usually found in His train. Naturally enough, little attention is bestowed upon them by the Evangelists ; at the same time sufficient is said to make it impossible to leave them out of the reckoning in any account of the companions of Christ. Moreover, the signal service they rendered to both Christ and the twelve deserves to be fully recognised.

The names of only a few of them are given ; but other particulars are added which enable us to form a fairly correct view of the group as a whole. They were mostly married ladies of the age probably of His own mother, who occupies a place in the centre of the group. Several of them are the mothers of some of His disciples. Thus we have Salome, the mother of James and John and the wife of Zebedee ; and Mary, the mother of Joses and James the less. Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Mary, the wife of Cleopas, are also named. Among those whose relations are not particularly described are His own maternal aunt, Susanna, and

Mary Magdalene. These facts go far to explain the presence of these women among the associates of Jesus.

But another fact is mentioned by Luke, the physician, which also throws light on the subject, namely, that Christ had healed most of these women of various infirmities. There are intimations that their numbers stretched far beyond the few who are named, so that it is not difficult to add to the list from the women whom, in the course of His ministry, He had blessed. They were thus attached to the company not only by natural ties, but they were specially bound to Him by the stronger bond of personal gratitude. It has been suggested that Mary Magdalene sustained a peculiar relationship to Jesus, and painters have depicted her as a beautiful young woman with a great wealth of auburn hair. Certainly she was always a prominent figure of the group. In addition to following Him on His preaching tours, she is mentioned as standing by His cross, watching His burial, buying spices for His embalmment and visiting the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection. She lingered behind in her grief after the others had gone, and claimed a right to remove and re-bury the body if it could be found. She was the first to see and speak with the risen Saviour, and

the first to tell the news to others. She is named fourteen times in the New Testament. These facts show that she was the most prominent woman in the group. But it was the prominence which her force of character and her special gratitude gave her ; for had her Lord not cast out of her seven devils ? That she was either young or beautiful is a pure imagination. She may have been both ; but if she was, the Evangelists never suggest any such thing, while they bear united witness to her grateful devotion to Christ and her zeal in His service.

One other fact about these women must be noted. It must have often occurred to thoughtful readers of the Gospels to ask how Christ and His disciples were supported during those three years, seeing that they had all given up their ordinary employment. Christ declared when sending forth His missionaries that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and told them to trust to the hospitality of the people ; and this they no doubt did. But practically it is not a satisfactory thing to be always thus dependent. There were times and places in which both Christ and His disciples were unpopular, and when it became necessary, as well as advisable, to be independent. That they were in the habit of receiving money for this purpose is evident both

from the fact that the community had a treasurer, and that we are told of the disciples, when passing through Samaria, going "into the city to buy food." Where did they get the money? The freewill offerings of people benefited may have done something in this direction, but looked at practically, thirteen men, in a country like Palestine, could hardly be wholly supported in that way. Besides, we have no hint that such freewill offerings were either asked or given. The true answer to the question of their support is that these women, who were evidently in some cases women of means, "ministered unto them of their substance." This indeed is given as the explanation of their presence among the disciples.

We have thus in the background of our Saviour's ministry this band of grateful, self-sacrificing, devoted women, to whose liberality and thoughtful service the whole apostolate was indebted, and who made it possible for Christ and His disciples to evangelise the whole of the country without casting themselves on the care of hearers who might be unsympathetic. And for rendering this important service these women must ever be held in love and respect and honour by all who have the interests of the Saviour's kingdom at heart. They did what they could to

make His earthly lot as comfortable as the circumstances would admit of ; and their tender sympathy and practical devotion must have cheered Him often when He turned, heavy at heart, from the opposition of unbelieving men. He had helped them and they helped Him, and thus they have a place among those who influenced His life.

3. OTHER FRIENDS. Christ was influenced by other friends besides those referred to. Among these may be mentioned Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, who played such a noble and conspicuous part at His burial. Nicodemus was early interested in the Saviour's mission, and sought a personal interview with the Great Teacher. The result of that interview was the discourse on regeneration and the most gracious statement of the love of God that was ever made to man. Nicodemus ever afterwards befriended Christ. He was a courageous man ; for not only, being a ruler, did he come to Christ, but when the challenge, "Hath any of the rulers believed on Him?" was thrown down in the council chamber Nicodemus, as a ruler, rose in his place and on a point of order defended Christ, and thereby was the means of getting His apprehension postponed to some future time. Both he and Joseph show that among men of position and influence

there were some who loved the Lord, even in Jerusalem.

We have said that the social instinct was largely developed in Jesus. This is seen in the prominence given in the Gospels to the incidents in which He is seen eating and drinking with His friends. The marriage at Cana, the feast in Levi's house, the feeding of the five thousand, the Lord's Supper, are instances, as well as the case of Zaccheus the publican, and particularly of the family of His special friends at Bethany, Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Christ never discoursed more interestingly or graciously than over the table in the midst of such friends. If we may be permitted without irreverence to say it, these occasions drew Him out in His brightest parables and aptest illustrations, and furnished Him with unrivalled opportunities of teaching men and women the deepest truths. Jesus knew that to eat and drink with publicans and sinners was the surest way to gain their confidence and do them good; and when we see the sinner whom He has forgiven bathing His feet with her tears of love at a Pharisee's table, we can realise, in measure, what seasons of refreshing to His soul such suppers must have been.

It was at one of these happy suppers that a

most significant service was done Him by one of the good women who valued His worth. As Prophet, Priest, and King, Christ was the Anointed of the Lord ; but while Aaron and Samuel and David were thus consecrated to their office, no priest was found to anoint the Saviour, till the inspiration of a deeper law than that of Moses moved a noble and pure-hearted woman to pour the precious ointment on His head. Mary's love was worth more to Christ than sweetest oil from the high priest's horn. He went to the cross consecrated after all.

We should like to linger over the discipline of Christ in this school of love and friendship. It had greater fruits in His character and life than appear to the eye. To these friends He manifested Himself as He could not do to the world, and their love supplied Him with the means of doing so. His fellowships here form a bright fringe about the discipline of pain He must soon undergo, and which we proceed to consider. But love outlasts pain ; and when the cross is past the way will be open for all men to enter His fellowship.

XI

THE CROSS

“Perfect through sufferings.”—HEB. ii. 10.

OF all the schools in which Christ learned, the school of sorrow was the most hallowed in its influence and abiding in its results. His training here extended over the whole of His earthly life, and gradually prepared Him for the apotheosis with which His sufferings were crowned. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in a striking passage shows us the Heavenly Scholar training in this school as the High Priest of humanity, and tells us the result of the training in these words: “Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the

things which He suffered ; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation." In this school Christ learned much ; in it He had many teachers : men and angels and devils ; in it He attained perfection ; and, when the discipline was complete, He was exalted to the right hand of God and crowned with glory and honour.

The cross is the symbol of this school. It stands for more than the death of Christ. It represents all His sufferings. The crucifixion was not confined to Calvary. The literal death of Christ was not all the death He died, but must be regarded, as we regard the literal cross, as but the historic, the graphic, the impressive, demonstration of deeper spiritual realities. Every act of self-sacrifice He did, every temptation He met, every pain of soul or body He endured, nailed Him to His cross. The culmination alone was on Calvary.

In illustrating these truths we shall look at Christ first as the Man of Sorrows enduring His cross ; then as the Crucified One in the midst of crucified men, separating them by His cross ; and finally try to set forth the sacrifice He made on His cross.

I. THE MAN OF SORROWS. This was Isaiah's description of the righteous Servant

of Jehovah who "was wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities." Christ began to fulfil the prophet's ideal in the very incarnation. His humiliation in stooping to assume our flesh began His real crucifixion. The New Testament thereafter only records incidents in its progress. His redemption from death as a first-born son, His circumcision to make Him a Jew after the flesh, His flight into Egypt to escape the fury of Herod's jealousy, His subjection as a boy to the authority of Joseph and Mary, and His life of toil, all entered into the composition of His cross. His temptation in the wilderness began a new series of lessons in this school, which increased in hardness till the last one was mastered and finished on the cross.

We read that, soon after returning to Galilee, Christ removed from Nazareth to Capernaum. The reason was that the Prophet had no honour in His own country and in His own house. His fellow-townsmen, who had honoured Him as the carpenter, soon began to hate Him as the preacher of righteousness; and He found it impossible, in the face of their opposition and unbelief, to do any mighty work among them. They were joined in their unbelief by His own brothers, probably also in their

ridicule of His religious ideas ; for we are informed that His own friends deemed Him mad. And the ridicule and unbelief of one's own brothers and friends is one of the most painful bits of discipline through which a young man can be put at the beginning of his religious career. It was a nail in Christ's cross which entered into His soul, and hurt Him more than any nail driven by the hand of the Roman soldier. As the Man of Sorrows He removed to Capernaum.

Later we see the wearied Christ sat, in pensive mood, on Jacob's well. He had been in Judea, full of hope and enthusiasm, meeting with greater success among the common people than even John. He had hoped for support and sympathy from the religious leaders in Jerusalem, many of whom John had baptized. But instead of sympathy, He met with their disapprobation and active hostility ; and seeing no farther good could then be done, He turned His feet northwards. And now He sits in loneliness by Jacob's well, knowing that His noblest motives have been misjudged, His best works unappreciated, and that He has been despised and rejected by those He most longed to bless. They are hard schoolmasters, those Pharisees, and unrelenting ! They have begun their heartless task, and they will

add sorrow upon sorrow till they break the Saviour's heart !

A still deeper grief pierced His soul as He sat, bathed in tears, on the brow of Olivet and poured forth His plaint over doomed Jerusalem. He had a vision there of what might have been, of what actually was, and of what was still to be; and there was something in the vision which crucified Him. Christ saw deeper into heaven and hell than we see. Our vision of a sinful world is too clouded for tears. But Christ beheld and wept ! He was enduring the agony of unrequited love. He was suffering for the sins of His people.

These were but incidents in His true crucifixion. To them must be added the sorrow of His betrayal when a false friend gave Him the traitor's kiss and put Him to an open shame, of the denial when a true friend failed Him in His hour of need through the fear of man, of the mock trial at Pilate's bar, of His derision in Herod's court, of the scarlet robe and the crown of thorns, all of which showed Him the temper of the world He sought to redeem. But Gethsemane witnessed His cruelest conflict. There, while His disciples slept for sorrow, He agonised in the effort to conquer it ; while they dreamed He prayed ; while they lay still

waiting events to shape themselves He through agony and blood was shaping the events that saved the world. Gethsemane proved Him complete Master of Himself, of all human passions, desires, and ambitions, proved Him Master of the devil, of the flesh, of the world. There was no longer resistance in His will, anger nor resentment in His heart. The finger that touched the wounded ear, the word that sheathed for ever the sword as an instrument in His kingdom, the resignation which staggered His captors and secured the liberty of His friends, all were the insignia of triumph. The discipline of the cross was complete ; and He went forth, "as a lamb to the slaughter," the conscious, willing sacrifice and propitiation for the sin of the whole world.

2. THE THREE CROSSES ON CALVARY. Poets, painters, and preachers have made us familiar with the story of the cross on Calvary, and of the fountain opened there for sin and uncleanness. We have also been accustomed to sing :

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,"

and to draw from his experience some comforting lessons. The third cross we have usually forgotten. We have meant right in these

religious exercises, though our theology, like our memory, may have been defective. The metaphors of "fountain" and of "flood" should never have been associated with the cross. They are the metaphors of baptism, not of atonement; and the cross is the instrument of atonement by which was shed "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel." But we anticipate.

The three crosses on Calvary form a single significant group. They are firstly and impressively a graphic and historic demonstration of the fatal character of sin. Whether we take them singly or as a group, they are a demonstration against sin. They stand on a hill conspicuous in the eye of the world. Not one of them can be hid. And what they have become they must have been intended to be by the arrangement of Him who makes even the wrath of man to praise Him. Written right across them in the universal language of the soul, are three sentences quoted in the Bible from the everlasting book of truth: "Be sure your sin will find you out"; "The way of transgressors is hard"; "The wages of sin is death." There is also a fourth sentence with some gleam of hope in it, written in more glorious letters than Pilate's inscription, on the centre cross: "Apart from the shedding

of blood there is no remission." Whatever else the cross is, it is an exhibition of the deadliness and guilt of sin.

But we look at those crosses and inquire whose crosses they were, and whose they ought to have been. Reading them from right to left they actually were, first the cross of the penitent thief, second the cross of Christ, and third the cross of the impenitent thief. But Christ had done nothing amiss to deserve such a punishment. We must therefore inquire whose crosses they ought to have been. The New Testament supplies the correct and significant answer.

Barabbas ought to have occupied the centre cross. He deserved such a death, if such a death is ever deserved. He had been the ringleader of a band of violent men to whom neither property nor human life had been sacred. Caught red-handed, he had been tried and sentenced along with two of his companions in crime to be hanged on the cross till dead. That he did not suffer was due to the fact that Christ was substituted for him. By the will of the people and consent of the law, Barabbas got a free pardon and was liberated. By the same authorities Christ was put in his room and stead on the cross. The innocent was put in the place of the guilty: the Saviour in the

room of the chief of sinners. This is simple, literal, historical fact. We are not now theorising or writing theology. There is no shred of theory or theology in the matter. We are looking only at the three literal crosses on Calvary, and the facts are as stated : Christ literally died in the room and stead of Barabbas. Those three crosses are therefore not only a demonstration against sin, but an equally graphic demonstration of the fact of substitution for the sinner, as far as the Sufferer on the centre cross is concerned.

We shall now change our view-point somewhat, standing farther back as it were, and look again at those crosses. Reading this time from left to right, we have, first the cross of the sinner, second the cross of the Saviour, and third the cross of the saint. For the sufferer on the right is a sinner saved by penitence and faith, and is therefore a saint as seen from our present view-point. Literally there is no difference observable in the sufferings of the three as far as their physical crucifixion is concerned. The difference comes in with the mental attitude of each to his cross and to his neighbour. In that mental attitude, and not in any physical act, lies the soul of perdition, of atonement, and of salvation.

The man on the left is unsubmissive to his cross, and calling on others to save him from its agony. The man on the right is submissive to his cross, feels the justice of his suffering, and asks for no relief from it. The Man in the centre is also submissive to His cross, and seeks no relief from it. Regarding his neighbour, each man has a different mind. The man on the left rails on the Sufferer in the centre. The man on the right prays to and defends Him. The Sufferer in the centre in figure stretches out a helping hand to each ; loving both, pitying both, forgiving both. The sinner is dying for his own sin, impenitent and blaspheming ; therefore *in* his sin, which is the soul of perdition. The saint is dying for his own sin, penitent and praying ; therefore *to* his sin, which is the soul of salvation. The sinless Saviour is dying on account of the sins of both, suffering with them in their suffering, dying with them in their death, and thus, by self-sacrifice on their behalf, manifesting to them, if they will but see, the all-forgiving love of Almighty God, which is the soul of atonement. The three crosses on Calvary have thus an intimate relation to each other, and react on each other in such a way as to supply us with data on which to base the deepest things.

3. THE TEACHING OF THE CROSS.—We have seen that the mental state of the sufferer is the vital matter in estimating the effects of the cross. We must now follow out this idea a little farther. It is evident that two men were crucified with Christ, on either side one and Jesus in the midst. This is both literally and historically true in an ordinary physical sense. In a far more important sense only one of the two was truly crucified. It is perfectly clear that one of the men was wholly out of sympathy with our Lord, while the other was in perfect harmony with Him. The latter alone was crucified with Christ.

To make this fact quite manifest let us recall Paul's declaration, "I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live." Paul was never crucified with Christ in the same sense as the two associates of Barabbas were. It is evident that the apostle is referring to some other crucifixion than such as could be carried out by Roman officers. It is also evident that Paul must have been crucified in the same sense as Christ, otherwise his words have no meaning ; and that Christ must have been crucified in the same sense as Paul before they two could have been fellow-sufferers. Paul, of course, is referring to a mental experience, and not to any physical tragedy. This experience he fully describes in a passage too

long to quote here, but which in this connection will amply repay study. In it he describes his own crucifixion. Fortunately he also describes the crucifixion of Christ in the preceding context. Just let any one first read Paul's description of Christ in Philippians, second chapter, from the fifth to the eleventh verses inclusive, and then read his description of himself in the third chapter, from the fourth verse to the eleventh inclusive, and he cannot fail to be struck with the parallelism of the experiences, or to understand at once what Paul meant by the cross and by crucifixion. He meant self-sacrifice in order to righteousness and as the expression of love: on the part of Christ towards man, and on the part of man towards Christ. Self-sacrifice is the spirit of the cross.

It is outwith the scope of this work to discuss any aspect of the atonement ; but this much may be here suggested, that by His cross in this larger sense Christ effected a reconciliation for the one man who was really crucified with Him on the basis of that one man's repentance towards his sin and his faith towards his Saviour. That mental attitude on the part of the sinner is the human half in the reconciliation. And the Divine half is just the means taken by God to bring about that mental attitude. And those means are

the various acts of Self-revelation made by the crucifixion of Christ in this larger sense. That "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses," is but another way of saying that God was in Christ revealing Himself unto the world in His true character as Lover and Forgiver of men. Neither the life nor the death of Christ effected any change in the mind or attitude of God towards the sinner. They but disclosed that mind. Christ revealed the love of God in three ways : He told men in gracious words that God was their Father, and loved them ; He showed them by His life of sympathy and beneficence what their Father's attitude was and had always been ; He proved to them by His life of sorrow and suffering what the Divine Love was prepared to sacrifice and endure in order to win men from sin. These are the means by which God changes the sinner's mind ; and they constitute the Divine half of the reconciliation. They constitute the true crucifixion of Christ, beginning at Bethlehem and culminating on Calvary. The literal cross is the symbol of the whole : the graphic and tragic demonstration, by means of a material sign, of the great moral fact that Divine Love suffers for human sin, and by thus revealing itself saves the sinner.

The best illustration of this is Christ's own parable of the prodigal son. It is perfectly clear that it is the son who is the sinner. It is also clear that the son suffers for his sin. But what of the father? He is wounded for the son's transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. Every day the son remains away the father bears his son's griefs and carries his son's sorrows. The father suffers longer and far more intensely than the son. No third party lays the son's sins upon the father. His suffering is the suffering incidental and essential to love, and it increases in intensity with the purity and strength of the love. Moreover, it is the knowledge of that love that brings the son home in penitence; and it is the love first causing and then kissing the penitence, which makes the atonement and effects the reconciliation.

Christ bears our sins in the same sense as the father bears the sins of the son; and the crucifixion of Love goes on till the prodigal comes home. In the case of Christ this crucifixion began with Herod's massacre of the children at Bethlehem and ended three-and-thirty years after with the Roman soldier's spear-thrust on Calvary. The events which fell in between these two extremes filled up the cup of human iniquity. The soldier's rude spear performed the last act of the

crucifixion. With it the Saviour's sorrow ended ; the sacrifice He came to make was complete ; and there issued from the very wound-print in His side the emblematic elements of sin's "double cure" : water to wash away its stain and blood to break its power.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the essential idea in the crucifixion was not death, but life. The crucifixion was the setting free of Christ's life, that it might become available for every man. Christ never lost His life. He laid it down only to take it up again when once, by laying it down, He had manifested the love of God. Hence the appropriate metaphor of atonement is *sprinkling* of blood ; that is, the distribution of life to the dying. The blood of Christ cleanses from sin, not as water does, but as life does. The surgeon may dress the wound from the outside with his medicated lotions to sweeten exposed surfaces, but it is the healthy life of the patient that heals the disease. It is the life of Christ in the soul that heals the wounds which sin has made ; and it is communicated to us through faith in the Crucified One. It is not any arrangements which Christ has made that saves the sinner, but Christ Himself ; and He made all the arrangements which cost Him so much in order to prove

both His love and power in a way man could appreciate and understand. And thus His cross still shows us that Christ crucified is in the midst of sinners, stretching out His arms to save, grieving over the hardened and leading the penitent through death to life with Him in paradise.

XII

THE EVER-LIVING CHRIST

“I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.”
—REV. i. 18.

CHRIST was dead ! Jew and Gentile in their organised capacity, and representing on the one hand the highest world-religion and on the other the greatest world-power, had combined in making His death certain. The sad offices of burial were undertaken by two sympathetic friends. Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus took the body from the cross and buried it in a new sepulchre in Joseph's garden. The entrance to the tomb was closed and sealed, a watch was set to prevent any interference with the body on the part of the disciples, and so closed the human career of the Christ of history.

There was an important sense in which Christ was never dead. Death in the

ordinary sense means mortification, the resolution of the body into its simple elements. That aspect of death never touched the body of Christ. As we have before pointed out, the body of Jesus was a body "prepared" for a special demonstration or manifestation of God. It was a body prepared for sacrifice only ; and was specially protected from seeing corruption by a Divine intention. If we overlook this fact, we are not true to the revelation of the idea of Christ's body and death which we have in the Scriptures. The ritual connected with the Old Testament sacrifices largely determines the language and the metaphors used to describe the work and death of Christ in the New Testament. The atoning sacrifices, for instance, were not offered with the idea of bringing certain innocent creatures to death, but with the idea of setting free their innocent life for distribution among the guilty. That is the idea of the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice. It is the distribution of life ; sinless, cleansing, consecrating life. Hence it is written in Leviticus : " The life of the flesh is the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls ; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." The crucifixion of Christ, therefore, viewed as the

fulfilment of a Divine purpose, had not mortification in view, but the liberation of life. This fact is best illustrated in the Lord's Supper. The essential idea in that ordinance is the distribution of Christ to the communicants, who thus, in symbol, become partakers of the Divine life. It is not argued that the body of Christ left to itself in Joseph's tomb was an incorruptible body. The contention is, that ideally its instructive and demonstrative purpose as a medium of revealing God was complete without the idea of mortification, and that the fact and the idea were made to correspond by the intervention of God in the resurrection.

I. THE RISEN CHRIST. The third day after the crucifixion the tomb in Joseph's garden was empty. Christ had tasted death for every man by the grace of God : He had descended into the domain of death where in all other cases the King of Terrors held his prey, and had come back to life again despite "the stone, the watch, the seal." The Risen Christ is the fact of Christianity. The resurrection is the keystone in the Christian arch which joins the seen world with the unseen. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is in vain ; ye are yet in your sins." We must not deceive ourselves, nor allow any specious theories to deceive us here.

If Christ be not risen, the Christian faith is vanity. If Christ be not alive to-day, the fact that He lived two thousand years ago is nothing to me.

Homer lived and sang eight hundred and fifty years or more before Christ; and thousands of devout Greeks were inspired and comforted by his music for many generations after he was gone, and even yet in all lands his classic poems are read and admired. But Homer saves no one to-day, he gives hope to no one after the grave. He is dead, and his dust has passed into a million new forms of matter. If Christ died in the same sense as Homer died, if He be dead in the same sense as Homer is dead, and rose not again on the third day as the Scriptures aver, what is He to me? What is the philanthropy of Christ worth to me if He be not a philanthropist in my day? To know that there once lived a wonderful man who used to be kind to people, and heal their diseases, and forgive their sins, and teach them many beautiful things, is nothing to me, or to the world in which I dwell, if He be a dead philanthropist! The atonement He made on Calvary is nothing to me in my sin, if the Christ died for ever in making it! The dead cannot atone for the living in their life, nor give hope to the dying in their

death ! If Christ be not alive now, I shall die and never live in any real or valuable sense beyond the grave.

It is right to theorise about the resurrection of Christ. It is right to sift the evidence, to weigh up the probabilities, and then to draw our conclusions. Our reason, our intelligence, our faith demand this service at our hands. But it is imperative that we should accept the consequences when we have come to a conclusion. Nothing can be more dishonest or more illogical than to believe that Christ is as dead as Homer, and yet profess to be Christians in the New Testament sense of the term. If Christ be risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that sleep, then Christianity is the gospel of eternal life and hope as it professes to be ; but if Christ be not risen from the dead, then, as Paul clearly saw, our faith is in vain, and we are of all men most miserable. The resurrection of Christ is the best attested fact of history.

2. THE TWO CHRISTS OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. If Christ be God manifest in the flesh, then it is perfectly clear that His earthly life was but a special and temporary episode in His history. And this is indeed the teaching of Scripture. Christ lived before the incarnation ; He survived after the

crucifixion. Having for a season assumed our flesh, so that it might be the medium of a fuller revelation of God, He resumed His former condition when the revelation was complete. This gives rise to what, for the purpose of calling attention to a vital truth, may be described as the two Christs of Christian thought.

There is first of all the Christ whose history we have been reviewing. His life began with His birth at Bethlehem and ended with His burial in Joseph's sepulchre. That life extended over a period of about thirty-three years and a half, covering the time of the special manifestation of God. It was the life of the Man Christ Jesus. We shall speak of Him as "Christ after the flesh."

There is, secondly, the purely spiritual Christ, without beginning of days or end of life. He is the Christ who was before all things, for whom, and by whom, all things were made, and in whom all things stand together. More specifically He is the Ever-living One. He is the Christ who was dead and is alive again for evermore, and who holds the keys of death and of the unseen world. He is emphatically the Risen Christ; and we shall so speak of Him.

It is necessary to make this distinction quite clear, in order to escape confusion.

Christ after the flesh is seen as John the Baptist saw Him on the banks of Jordan. He is seen with the bodily eyes as a man. The Risen Christ is seen as Paul saw Him while on his way to Damascus. He is not seen with the bodily eyes, but by the moral perception. In Paul's case the bodily eyes were darkened before the true vision came. Christ after the flesh is revealed physically to men, the Risen Christ is revealed spiritually in men. It is the Risen Christ that all Christians since the ascension look to and see ; and they always see Him by faith or the moral perception, and He is always revealed in them. We linger with loving interest over all the details of the life of "Christ after the flesh." They form the historical basis of our faith. They are in particular the literal prototypes of our Christian ideas.

To make what is meant clear, let us consider one or two illustrations. We speak of following the steps of Jesus. Peter and James and John followed the steps of "Christ after the flesh" when on His way to raise up the daughter of Jairus. We can never do that kind of thing. When we speak of following "the steps" of Jesus, we use a metaphor derived from some incident in our Lord's earthly life to describe some act of spiritual conformity on our part to His

spirit. Thus during the days of His flesh Christ showed us that He always went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He thus illustrated an eternal habit of His. He used to go to church before His incarnation for the same beneficent purposes which He did during the incarnation, and He continues to go to church after His ascension. Christ risen is still attending the synagogues on the Sabbath day, and always wherever two or three are gathered together in His name. We follow His steps—not by walking to church—but by having a kindred spirit to that which constrained Him to go, and still to come. We have already seen how the literal crucifixion of “Christ after the flesh” was but the literal prototype of a spiritual crucifixion such as Paul suffered. That is the only kind of crucifixion Christians endure. So it is with the idea of burial. The placing of the body of “Christ after the flesh” in the sepulchre becomes a seed-thought out of which spiritual ideas grow. Paul speaks of the Roman Christians as buried with Christ. But they never were so buried literally. He is referring to the spiritual act of putting away for ever what he describes as the old man, the sinful, unconverted, unregenerated, un-Christian man ; just as the body of Christ in which He

had borne the sins of the world, and therefore regarded as sinful, was put away when it was laid in the grave. Similarly the literal resurrection of Christ becomes the root of a great spiritual idea, namely, the emergence from a former condition of unbelief and sin of the new man, that he may walk in the newness of the life of faith and holiness.

“Christ after the flesh” was the Divine Medium or Mediator thus manifested in order to lead man into fellowship with Him who is the first and the last and the Living One. And the incidents of His earthly life were just intended, on the one hand, to reveal the Father’s heart to us, and on the other to supply us with actual illustrations of spiritual experiences, in and through all of which we have the Ever-living Christ with us as our power to realise them. It is thus the Risen Christ who is the chief object of Christian faith and thought. We revert to the earthly life of Christ for illustrations of the character and spirit and power of the Risen Christ, in whom we to-day trust, because we know that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever.” What He was on earth, He was before He came to earth. What he was on earth, He is now and will always be. His incarnation brought God down into our humanity ; His ascension

lifted our humanity up to God. We can therefore now enter into direct fellowship with the Ever-living One ; and for this reason we exercise faith rather than sight, looking directly to the Risen Saviour rather than by any effort of memory going back to Bethlehem and Calvary. This is what Paul means when he declares : " Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." Paul was probably familiar with all the incidents of Christ's earthly career, he probably knew Jesus by sight as a young man about Jerusalem ; but Paul seldom, if ever, refers to any of these things. He is taken up almost wholly with the contemplation and service of the risen, spiritual Saviour who had been revealed in him. It is not the Christ who was, but the Christ who is, that we trust. We live in His fellowship, as Paul did, through the Spirit.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST. When Christ was on earth with His disciples He frequently told them that He would go away and leave them, as far as His bodily presence was concerned. But He also always promised them that He would come back again in such a form that He could be always with them. In His last interview with them before His ascension, when He gave them their commission to preach the

gospel in all the world, He assured them of two things : first, that all authority in heaven and on earth was His ; and second, that wherever His disciples might go in any age He Himself would be always with them. He farther told them not to leave Jerusalem until the promise they had so often heard from Him should be fulfilled. He referred in particular to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The promise was actually fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Now the question arises, Did Christ refer to two comings or only to one? Did He mean His disciples to understand that in their mission work they would have two spiritual presences with them or only one? Did He mean them to believe that He Himself would always be with them and in them wherever they might go, and that along with Him and them there would be a third presence, also spiritual? Did He mean them and us to believe that He Himself would abide with His disciples to the end of the world for spiritual companionship simply, and that the Holy Spirit would also be always with them to give them comfort and power? The answer to these questions is not without difficulty, chiefly owing to the ambiguities of language and the wealth of illustration with which aspects of spiritual things are

presented to us. But the answer should be attempted.

Were we dealing with such a doctrine as the Trinity, then it would become necessary to draw as clear a distinction as possible between the functions and offices of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as these are illustrated in the sacred Scriptures. But we are not dealing with a doctrine, but with a Person in His various manifestations at different times in His history. We therefore regard Pentecost as the return of Christ in a spiritual form to fulfil His promise to be an abiding presence in them, and with them alway and everywhere until the end of the ages. For there are not two independent spiritual Presences in the Church, but only one, since from this view-point the Holy Spirit is identical with the Spirit of Christ, or the Spiritual Christ. It is not contended that we may not fittingly and Scripturally speak of both the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit, according as we are thinking of one aspect of truth or another, just as it is fitting to speak of the Father and of the Son, according as we are thinking of one relation of ideas or another. But when we rise above mere aspects and relations to absolute being, then the truth is expressed on the one hand by the formula, "I and the

Father are one," and on the other by the equally Scriptural identification, I and the Spirit are one. For Christ on earth is God manifest in the flesh, and Christ risen is still God conceived of in relation to that past manifestation ; and the terms we use are chosen in keeping with the relation we have in mind.

In one sense Pentecost was Christ's second incarnation. His Church became His second body, or the human medium through which, ever since the ascension, He has continued to impress Himself on the world. Just as "in the days of His flesh" God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, so now that He is risen, Christ is in the Church reconciling the world to God. Pentecost was the filling of the Church with the presence and power of the Risen and Ever-living Christ.

The proof that Christ is alive in His Church to-day is an appeal to personal experience and to history. Paul needed no evidence of the senses to convince him that Christ was living in him. No miracle or supernatural event appealing to the senses could ever be so well attested by evidence as the fact of the new life in the man who believes in Jesus. The change that was produced in Paul's modes of thought and manner

of life while on his way to persecute the Christians at Damascus, was not produced by an idea, or an hallucination, or a dream, but by the Risen Christ. The change in the life of John Newton, Cowper's friend, was not due to any resolution on his part, but to the revelation in him of the Risen Saviour as the power of God and the wisdom of God. The experience is common to all the living members of Christ's body.

Similarly the Church herself does not rest on the hallucinations, so-called, of Mary Magdalene, nor even on the testimony of Peter and Paul, but on her conscious experience of the abiding presence of Christ. The constraining power which brought martyrs joyfully to the stake, that sends missions to declare Christ's name in every land, that has made the Bible by many million copies every year the most popular book ever penned, and which keeps men loyal to Christ to-day, is a personal power. If the continuance of Christianity had depended on the Church keeping up the memory of a dead hero, the Church herself would have long since been dead and Christianity a forgotten religion. If its continuance had depended on the Bible alone, criticism would soon have shaken the faith of the most devoted lover of the Book. But

the reason why neither time, nor persecution, nor criticism affects faith is because the believer has "the witness in himself" that Christ is alive, making all such oppositions powerless.

Christ, then, is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and the unseen world. His reign on earth is begun. Every life that yields obedience to Him is proof of His power. When He rose from the dead the last enemy of man acknowledged His sovereignty. Death and Satan are vanquished foes, and but serve till the dispensation closes, when the Living One will be again manifested in power and great glory. And while awaiting His coming, those who believe in Him know that He can lay His once pierced hand on fallen man and lift up all who trust Him into fellowship with God ; because they know by the experience of faith that "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

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